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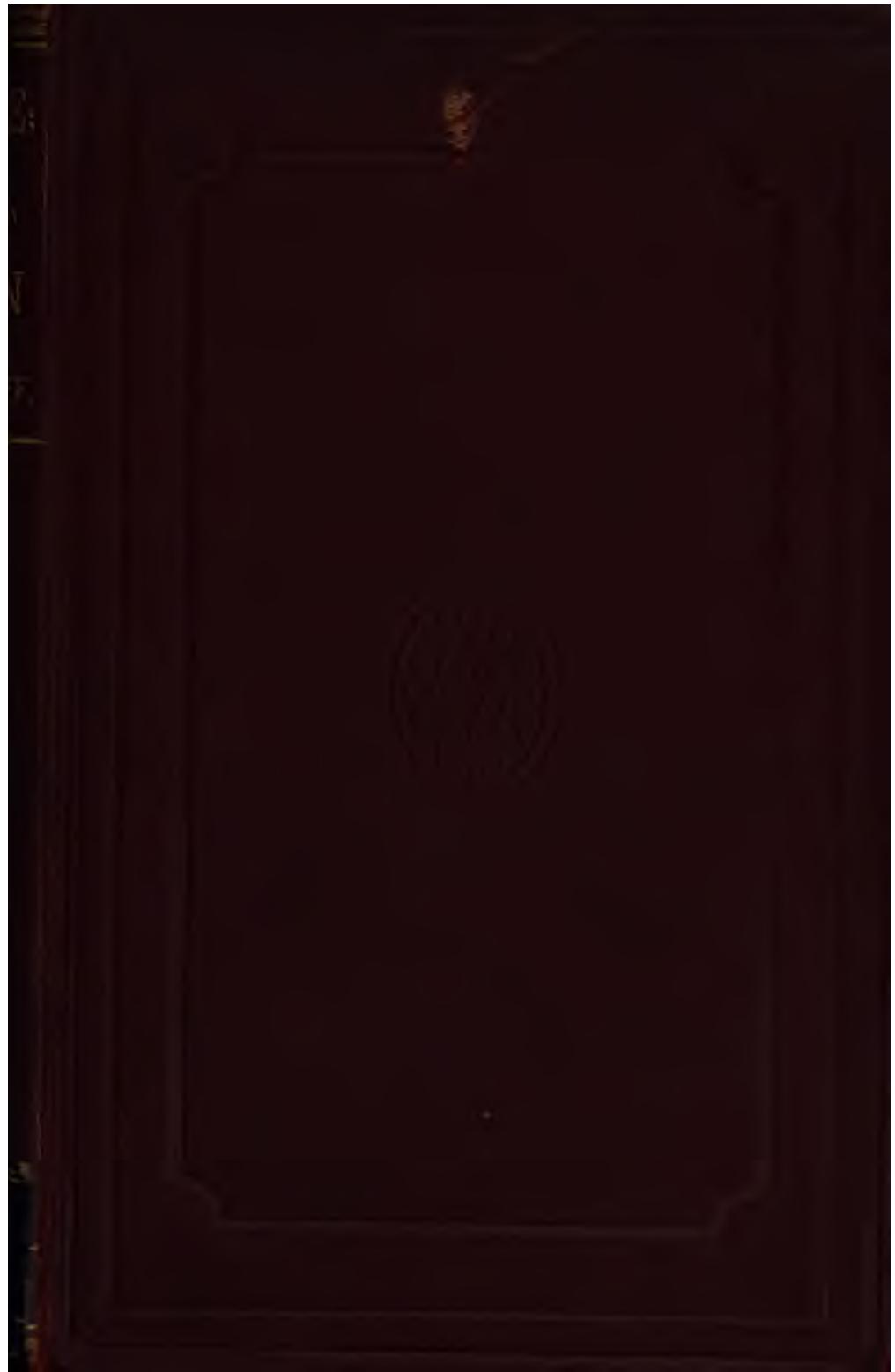
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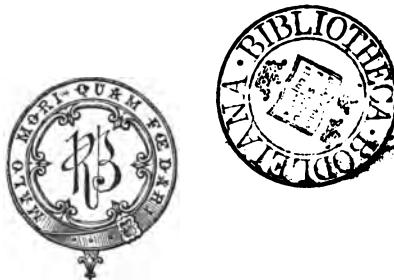
LIFE AT BADEN.

A NOVEL.

BY J. TOURGUENEEF.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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S M O K E.

CHAPTER XIV.

LITVINOF found a large number of people at Irene's. In one corner three of the generals of the picnic were sitting at a table at cards—the stout one, the irascible one, and the mealy-mouthed one.

They were playing whist with a dummy, and our vocabulary has no terms to express the gravity with which they dealt the cards, picked up the tricks, and laid down a club or a diamond; they were true statesmen.

Leaving to common people the jokes which usually accompany card-playing, our generals uttered none but necessary words; the stout one alone permitted himself, between the tricks, to call out energetically, “Oh! he had the spade!”

Among the ladies, Litvinof recognized those who had been present at the picnic; but there were also others whom he had not seen before.

One of them was so old, that she looked as though she would fall to dust; she displayed shoulders which were so colourless and bony that it was painful to look at them; and, with her mouth hidden behind her fan, she was looking with a languishing expression at Ratmirof with eyes which resembled those of a corpse. The latter was profuse in his attentions to her, and she was held in great consideration by the

whole of the company, because she was the last maid-of-honour to the Empress Catherine.

At a window, dressed like a nymph, was sitting the Countess Ch——, "the queen of wasps," surrounded by a number of young men, among whom could be distinguished, by his arrogant air, his flat skull, and the brutish expression of his features—worthy of a khan in Bucharia or Heliogabale—the celebrated capitalist, Finikof.

Another lady, also a countess, better known by the name of Lise, was conversing with a fair-haired spark, a spiritualist, with a wax-like face and nervous eyes, by the side of whom stood a gentleman also very pale, and wearing his hair extremely long, who smiled with a look of importance. To spiritualism he added the gift of

prophecy, and explained with equal facility the *Apocalypse* and the *Talmud*. None of his predictions, it is true, had ever been realized, but that did not trouble him in the least, and he continued to prophesy with unabated confidence.

At the piano was installed the “rough diamond” who had so harrowed up the temper of Potoughine. With one hand he was absently striking an occasional note as he gazed negligently about him.

Irene was sitting upon a divan, between Prince Coco and Madame H—, an *ex-beauty* and *ex-femme d'esprit*, now a lady of pious pretensions and a bad temper; the oil of sanctity had diluted the venom of her tongue without washing a particle of it away.

On seeing Litvinof, Irene coloured and rose, and when he reached her, she eagerly

pressed his hand. She had on a black dress with almost imperceptible gold figures, which admirably showed off the dazzling whiteness of her complexion. Her face wore an expression of pride and triumph, and she was not merely beautiful; a half-concealed, almost mocking joy, shone from her half-closed eyes, and played round her lips and nostrils.

Ratmirof came towards Litvinof, and, after exchanging a few commonplace words with him, which were not spoken with his usual sprightliness, introduced him to several ladies—to the old ruin, to the queen of wasps, and to the Countess Lise, who welcomed him with sufficient kindness.

Litvinof did not belong to their circle, but he was not bad; his expressive features and his youthful appearance attracted their attention. He did not know how to profit

by this favourable reception; he was unaccustomed to society, and did not feel himself at ease, and moreover he was embarrassed by the obstinate stare of the fat general.

“Ah! pekin jacket! freethinker!” this fixed stare seemed to say, “you are pushing yourself in here, are you? Must we give you our hands to kiss?”

Irene came to Litvinof’s assistance, and arranged so adroitly, that he found himself comfortably seated in a corner, near the door, just behind her. Every time she addressed him, she was obliged to turn round, and each time he was dazzled by the graceful curve of her neck, and intoxicated by the perfume of her hair.

The expression of a deep but quiet gratitude never left her countenance as she looked at him—he could not mistake it;

yes, it was gratitude, and he felt his heart pant with joy. Irene seemed to be continually saying to him, "Well, what do you think of them?" and Litvinof fancied especially that he could read that question in her eyes when one of the company said or did something stupid, which happened more than once in the course of the evening. Once she could not contain herself, but burst out laughing.

Extremely superstitious and inclined to the marvellous, the countess, after having exhausted with her *sage beau* a conversation upon Home, ended by asking him if animals were susceptible of magnetism.

"There exists one at least who is," exclaimed Prince Coco from the other end of the drawing-room. "You know Mikvanosky? He was sent to sleep in my presence, and in a second he was snoring. Ha! ha!"

“ You are very wicked, prince. I spoke of real animals; I mean beasts.”

“ Why, so do I, madame; I speak of a beast.”

“ There are animals which are susceptible,” declared the spiritualist; “ for instance, crabs: they are very nervous animals, and easily fall into catalepsy.”

The countess expressed great surprise.

“ What, crabs! is it possible? Ah! that is extremely curious. I should really like to see it. Monsieur Lonjine,” she added, turning towards a young man who had the face of a wax doll, and wore a collar as stiff as a board (he was very proud of having wetted his collars in the spray of the falls of Niagara and the cataracts of the Nile, but recollectcd nothing else of his travels, and admired nothing so much as Russian puns), “ Mon-

sieur Lonjine, be so kind as to procure a crab for me."

M. Lonjine bowed.

"Must I bring it living or lively?"

The countess did not understand.

"Yes, a crab," she repeated, "a crab."

"What is that? What is a crab?" inquired the Countess Ch——, seriously.

The absence of M. Verdier annoyed her; she could not understand why Irene had omitted to invite that most delightful of Frenchmen. The old ruin (she had long since ceased to understand anything, she had besides the advantage of being deaf) also shook her head with a look of disapprobation.

"*Oui, oui, vous allez voir.* Monsieur Lonjine, I beg——"

The young traveller bowed, and left the room; and it was not long before he re-

turned, followed by a servant, who was making desperate efforts to prevent himself from laughing, carrying upon the dish an enormous crab.

“*Voici, madame!*” exclaimed Lonjine; “we can now proceed to operate upon the crab. Ha! ha! ha!”

The Russians are always the first to laugh at their own jokes.

“Ho! ho! ho!” laughed Prince Coco, faithful to his duty as patriot and patron of native productions.

We must here beg the reader to excuse us: who can answer that, sitting in a fauteuil at the Alexander Theatre, and carried away by the atmosphere of the place, he may not have been induced to laugh at a worse pun?

“*Merci, merci!*” said the countess. “*Allons, allons, Monsieur Fox, montrez-nous ça.*”

The servant placed the dish upon a round table. There was visible curiosity throughout the room. Necks were extended, and eyes were fixed upon the dish upon which lay the crab; the generals at the card-table alone preserved their solemn impassibility.

The spiritualist threw back his hair, contracted his brows, and approaching the table, began to wave his hands in the air, at which the crab moved backwards and drew in its claws. The operator quickened his movements, and the crab followed his example.

“*Mais que doit-elle donc faire?*” asked the countess.

“*Elle doit rester immobile et se dresser sur sa quion,*” responded Mr. Fox, with a very decided American accent, as he agitated his fingers over the dish.

But the magnetism did not produce

any result: the crab only became more petulant.

The spiritualist declared that he was not in the vein, and moved discontentedly from the table. The countess endeavoured to console him by assuring him that Mr. Home himself did not always succeed. The Prince Coco confirmed these words.

The expounder of the Apocalypse and the Talmud stealthily approached the table, and, by making some abrupt movements over the crab, also tried his luck; but he met with no better success than the other; not a sign of catalepsy manifested itself.

The servant was called to take away the crab, which he succeeded in doing, but not without exploding immediately he got outside the door—which explosion did not prevent him from joining afterwards in a

roar of laughter which greeted its return to the kitchen *über diese Russen*.

The rough diamond, who had continued to run his fingers over the keys of the piano during the operation upon the crab, confining himself to the lower notes (for who could tell that the music may not act upon the nerves even of a crustacean?), now played his eternal waltz, and was somewhat coldly applauded.

Excited to emulation, Count H——, our incomparable dilettante (see the first chapter), sang a ballad of his own composition, entirely borrowed from Offenbach. His lively refrain—“*Quel œuf! quel bœuf!*” caused almost every lady in the room to balance their heads from right to left; and at the conclusion, one of them slightly clapped her hands, on which there was a general exclamation of “*Charmant! charmant!*”

Irene exchanged a glance with Litvinof, and a sarcastic smile again curled her lips. That expression was still more visible a moment afterwards, and took a shade of malicious pleasure, when Prince Coco, the representative and protector of the aristocratic interests, took it in his head to lay his opinions before the spiritualist, naturally not losing the opportunity of bringing in his celebrated phrase upon the unsettled state of Russian ownership, and of course not sparing the democrats.

The American blood of the spiritualist bubbled up, and he plunged into the discussion.

As usual, Prince Coco, instead of giving reasons, began to shout and to repeat: "It's absurd. There is not common sense in it."

The rich Finikof began to utter insulting

expressions, without caring upon whom they fell ; the Talmudist whined ; and the Countess Ch—— herself dived into the *mélée*. It was a cacophony almost equal to that which had taken place at Goubaref's, only the beer and tobacco-smoke were wanting, and the actors wore more elegant costumes.

Ratmirof endeavoured to restore order (the generals openly expressed their annoyance, and among their voices could be heard that of Boris, exclaiming, "Those cursed politics again !"), but he did not succeed, and a statesman of the moderate party having undertaken to present *le résumé de la question en peu de mots*, suffered a complete defeat.

It is true that he mumbled and stammered so much, knew so little how to grasp the arguments, and allowed it so

plainly to be seen that he did not know himself of what the *question* consisted, that no other result could have been expected.

Then Irene secretly excited the two parties, and set them at each other, glancing at Litvinof, her lips curling with contemptuous smiles.

As for Litvinof, he seemed to be under the dominion of a charm. He hardly understood what was passing; he could only follow with his eyes that graceful form, with a secret longing for those magnificent eyes to be turned towards him, that he might again see that pale, lovely, disdainful, enchanting face.

At last the ladies grew tired of the subject and demanded a truce; after which Ratmirof begged the dilettante to repeat his song, and the rough diamond once more played his waltz.

Litvinof remained till twelve o'clock, and was the last to leave.

The conversation touched, in the course of the evening, upon a great variety of subjects, carefully avoiding everything that offered a particle of real interest; and, after having finished their majestic play, the generals majestically took part in the discussion.

The influence of these great men was felt immediately. They began to talk of the celebrities of the Parisian *demi-monde*, the names and characteristics of whom were known to each; they also talked of the last play of Sardou, About's new novel, and Patti in *La Traviata*.

Some one proposed to play *Au Secrétaire*, but that did not please. The replies were without wit, but to make up had numerous faults in orthography. The stout

general related that it had once happened to him, at the question, “*Qu'est-ce que l'amour?*” to reply, “*Une colique remontée au cœur;*” and immediately burst into his coarse laugh. The ruin gave him a stroke upon the hand with her fan, an energetic movement which detached from her forehead a small piece of the stucco with which she had plastered her face.

The ex-blue-stocking mentioned the slave principalities, and the necessity of propagating the orthodox creed upon the Danube; but she received no echo. In short, it was upon Home that they disputed with most pleasure. The queen of wasps herself descended to relate that she had seen hands laid upon her knees, and that she had put her own ring upon one of them.

Even if Litvinof had paid attention to what was being said around him, he would

not have found, among this babble, without argument or animation, a single heartfelt word, a single judicious thought, or a single new fact. Even the loud cries and exclamations lacked heart, and there appeared to be no earnestness even in the slander.

These people, moaning over the fate of their country, in reality deplored only the probable diminution of their own incomes. At that thought their fears were sufficiently real, and names which will not be forgotten by posterity, were pronounced by them with gnashing of teeth.

You would have looked in vain for a single drop of living water beneath all this rubbish, beneath all these sweepings. What tinsel, what vain trifles, what frivolous thoughts, occupied all these heads, all these souls! and occupied them not only during

this *soirée*, not only in company, but at home, every day, every hour, throughout their whole existence! In one word, what ignorance! What want of intelligence about all that constitutes and adorns human life!

On taking leave of Litvinof, Irene again pressed his hand, and murmured to him in a significant tone—

“Well, are you satisfied? You have seen for yourself. Is it not enchanting?”

He did not speak, but bowed in silence.

Left alone with her husband, Irene was about to go to her bedroom; but he stopped her.

“*Je vous ai beaucoup admirée ce soir, madame,*” he said, as he leaned upon the chimney-piece and smoked his cigarette; “*vous vous êtes parfaitement moquée de nous tous.*”

“Pas plus cette fois-ci que les autres,”
she replied, tranquilly.

“How am I to interpret that?”

“As you please.”

“Humph! that is evident.”

Ratmirof shook with precaution, by a cat-like movement, the ashes from his cigarette, using the nail of his little finger.

“I suppose your new acquaintance—what is his name? M. Litvinof? — I suppose he enjoys the reputation of a man of sense?”

At the name of Litvinof, Irene turned abruptly.

“What do you say?”

The general smiled.

“He is always silent—one would suppose he was afraid of committing himself.”

Irene smiled in her turn, but in quite another manner.

“He had better hold his tongue than talk like some people did.”

“Caught!” said he, with a feint at submission. “Jesting aside, he has a very interesting face, an expression — concentrated, and his general figure——”

Ratmirof broke off, and arranged the bow of his tie. “Yes, I presume he is a republican, after the style of your other friend, M. Potoughine; that is another silent genius!”

The eyebrows of Irene were slowly raised, and her large eyes glittered, as she slightly contracted her lips.

“Why do you say that?” she asked, with a look of feigned compassion. “You are thrusting your sword into water. We are not in Russia, and nobody will hear you.”

Ratmirof’s face contracted involuntarily.

“That is not merely my opinion, Irene Pavlovna,” he added, in a voice which had suddenly become hollow; “others think that the gentleman has the look of a carbonaro.”

“Indeed! and who are those others?”

“Why Boris, for example——”

“What, *he* also thought it necessary to express an opinion?”

Irene made a movement, as though she was cold, and rubbed her shoulder with the ends of her fingers.

“He!—yes, he!—Permit me to observe, Irene Pavlovna, that you are getting angry, and, you know, when a person gets angry——”

“I getting angry? What about?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps you did not like the remark I made respecting——”

Ratmirof broke off.

“Respecting whom?” demanded Irene, imperatively. “Now, as soon as you please, and without sarcasm. I am tired, and want to go to bed.”

And she took up a candle from the table.

“Respecting whom?”

“Why, respecting this M. Litvinof. Since there is no longer any doubt that you think a great deal of him.”

Irene raised the hand which held the candle till the light fell full upon her husband’s face. For a moment she looked him straight in the eyes with attention and curiosity, then abruptly burst into a peal of laughter.

“What is the matter with you?” demanded Ratmirof, contracting his brows. “What is it?” he repeated, stamping his foot.

He felt himself insulted and humbled, and at the same time the beauty of that woman, standing before him with such ease and assurance, dazzled and tortured him: her graceful attitude, her half-defiant, half-compassionate look, even the dainty taper fingers which held the candle, fascinated and stung him; and the insult sank deeper into his heart.

And Irene continued to smile.

“What! you are jealous?” she said at length; and turning her back to her husband, she left the room. “He is jealous!” he heard her repeat, as she closed the door after her, with a fresh peal of laughter.

Ratmirof watched his wife go out, with a gloomy look. Here again he could not help observing, what seduction there was in her whole form and in every movement. He dashed out the light from his cigarette and

threw it across the room. His cheeks were pale, his lips quivered, and his eyes wandered over the floor with a wild, bewildered stare; one would have thought he was looking for something. All trace of its usual refinement had vanished from his face: it must have worn some such expression when he caused the peasants to be flogged to death in White Russia.

Meanwhile Litvinof had returned to his chambers. Sitting upon a chair before a table, with his face buried in his hands, he remained for a long while motionless. At length he got up, opened a box, and took out a portfolio, from which he drew a carte-de-visite of Tatiana. Faded and aged, as photography often renders faces, that of Tatiana looked at him sadly.

Litvinof's intended was a young girl of pure Russian blood, fair, rather inclined to

be stout, with somewhat irregular features, but with a singular expression of goodness and candour in her clear brown eyes, and a fine forehead, upon which a sunbeam always seemed to rest.

Litvinof remained for a considerable time with his eyes fixed upon the portrait; then he put it away and once more clasped his face with his hands. "All is over!" he murmured at length; "Irene! Irene!" He understood now that he was smitten with her madly, irrevocably; that he had been in love with her ever since the meeting at the Old Château, and that he had never ceased to think of her since. How surprised he would have been, how incredulous he would have been—nay, more, how he would have ridiculed the idea, if some one had told him that he would find himself obliged to make such a confession a few days before!

“Oh ! Tatiana, Tatiana ! Oh ! God ! Tatiana ! Tatiana !” he repeated in an agonized tone.

And the image of Irene still constantly stood before him in her black dress, but with the resplendent calm of victory upon a face as white as marble.

CHAPTER XV.

LITVINOV threw himself upon the bed without undressing, but did not close his eyes all night; he felt stifled. A really honourable man, he understood the value of obligations and the sacredness of duty, and considered it a shame to seek to hide his weakness and his faults from his own conscience.

He was at first under the dominion of a sort of lethargy; he could not for a long time throw off a defined feeling, a confusion of his senses which prevented him from

thinking clearly of anything ; then he was seized with terror at the thought that the future which he had scarcely succeeded in clearing from obstacles, was again overshadowed with gloom, and that the edifice which he had built up with so much care was shattered at a single shock.

He began to accuse himself without mercy, but soon interrupted his accusations. "What pusillanimity!" he exclaimed. "It is not the time to make reproaches now, it is the time to act. Tatiana is my bride ; she has placed faith in my love, in my honour ; we are united for eternity, and we cannot, we will not be separated."

He called to mind all Tatiana's good qualities, and thought them over one by one, striving to excite himself to contrition and to call back his love for her. "There remains only one thing to be done," he

thought, “to fly from this place, to escape immediately, without waiting for her arrival, to go and meet her, to——. Shall I be unhappy with Tatiana? that is improbable; at any rate, I have no right now to discuss that hypothesis, or even to take it into consideration; I must fulfil my duty, and then die, if it is necessary.” “But you have no right to deceive her,” murmured another voice; “you have no right to conceal from her the change which has taken place in your feelings; knowing you to be in love with another, perhaps she would no longer be your wife.” “Falsehood! falsehood!” he replied; “all that is only sophistry, shameful artifice, faithlessness; I have no right to break my word, that is the first thought. I must fulfil my duty—but then, I must go without seeing the other.”

Here the heart of Litvinof beat fast;

he was cold, physically cold ; a shiver ran over his body and his teeth chattered ; he stretched out his arms and gaped, as persons do at the approach of fever. Without insisting upon the last thought, but stifling it, thrusting it from him, he began to ask himself how he could have again allowed himself to be seduced by this corrupt and worldly-minded woman, surrounded by people who were so repugnant and so hostile to him. "Can it be true ?" he asked himself ; and the only reply was a sigh of despair.

And, even while he thus expressed surprise and tried to shut out from his thoughts all the incidents of the last few days, enchanting features rose up like a shadow ; beautiful lashes were raised from eyes whose deep regard seemed to look into his soul, and graceful shoulders, the shoulders of a

young queen, hovered before him amidst the perfumed darkness.

The next morning Litvinof formed at length a resolution. He decided that he would go and join Tatiana the same day ; that, in a last interview with Irene, he would tell her, if it could not be managed otherwise, the whole truth, and never see her again.

He collected and packed up his things, waited till the middle of the day, and then went out.

But at the sight of the half-closed blinds, his heart failed him ; he had not the courage to cross the threshold of the hotel, and took several turns in the Allé de Lichtenthal.

“ I have the honour to present my respects to M. Litvinof,” abruptly said a sneering voice from the top of an elegant dog-cart.

Litvinof raised his eyes, and saw General Ratmirof perched up by the side of Prince M——, a well-known sportsman.

The prince was driving ; the general was leaning over the side of the vehicle, and showing his teeth, as he raised his hat with the most elegant politeness.

Litvinof returned the bow, and the next instant, as though in obedience to some mysterious command, strode away and entered the apartments.

She was at home. He was announced and received immediately. When he entered, she was standing in the middle of the room. She had on a morning dress with full sleeves ; and her pale face showed signs of fatigue. She held out her hand to him, and looked at him pleasantly, but in a pensive manner.

“Thank you for coming,” she said in a

mournful tone, and allowed herself to sink into a chair. "I am not very well to-day; I have passed a sleepless night. Well, what did you think of the party last evening? Was I not right?"

Litvinof took a seat.

"I am come, Irene Pavlovna——" he began.

She sat upright and looked fixedly at Litvinof.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed. "You are as pale as death. You are ill. What is the matter with you?"

Litvinof was very much agitated.

"What is the matter with me, Irene Pavlovna?"

"You have received some bad news? Some misfortune has happened? Tell me! tell me!"

Litvinof turned his eyes towards Irene.

“I have received no news,” he said, not without an effort; “but a misfortune has indeed happened—a great misfortune—and it is that which brings me to you.”

“A misfortune? What can it be?”

“It is this:—I——”

He struggled hard to go on, but it was impossible. He clasped his hands so tightly that the fingers cracked. Irene leaned forward, and waited eagerly for him to continue.

“Oh! I love you!” said Litvinof, with a deep groan, as though the words had been violently torn from his chest.

And he turned away to hide his face.

“What, Gregory Mikhailovitch, you——”

Irene, in her turn, failed to finish her sentence, and, sinking back in her chair, placed both hands before her face.

“You—love me?”

“Yes—yes—yes!” he repeated with a deep sigh, as he turned his face further away.

For several minutes the most profound silence reigned in the room. A butterfly was agitating its wings and beating against the window, but that was the only sound. Litvinof was the first to speak.

“That, Irene Pavlovna, that is the misfortune which has—struck me; which I ought to have foreseen and avoided; which I might have avoided if—as I was before at Moscow—I had not been carried away by the torrent. It seems as though fate had willed that I should undergo another trial, and again through you, and suffer torments which I thought could never be renewed. I have resisted, I have tried to resist, but it is useless to struggle against that which must happen. I say all this, in order that we may the sooner come to the

end of this—this tragi-comedy,” he added, with a fresh explosion of violence and shame.

Litvinof paused. The butterfly continued to beat its wings against the window. Irene still sat with her hands before her face.

“And you are not deceiving yourself?” These words came from between hands so white that they seemed not to have a drop of blood in them.

“I do not deceive myself,” replied Litvinof, in a hollow voice. “I love you as I have never loved another. I do not attempt to reproach you—that would be too absurd; I will not tell you that perhaps all this would not have happened, if you had acted otherwise towards me. No doubt, I alone am guilty; my presumption has destroyed me. I am justly punished; you could not have expected such a result; of

course you could not foresee that it would have been less dangerous for me, had you not so earnestly sought to excuse to me your fault—your so-called fault—and if you had not been so anxious to repair it. But what is the use of talking of the past? I only wish to explain my position to you: it is sufficiently painful. At least, as you said, there will exist no misunderstanding now; and the frankness of my confession will, I hope, diminish the mortification which you must feel."

Litvinof spoke without raising his eyes; besides, if he had looked at Irene, he would not have been able to see what was passing upon her countenance, for she still kept it concealed by her hands. However, what was passing over that face would perhaps have surprised him: there was both terror and joy; a strange calm, and, at the same

time, an anxiety that was even more strange. Her eyes were partly closed, and the deep breathing came in spasms and seemed to parch her half-open lips.

Litvinof remained silent, expecting a reply, a sound ; but none came.

“It now only remains for me to wish you good-bye,” he added ; “I came to take leave of you.”

Irene allowed her hands to fall slowly upon her knees.

“But I thought, Gregory Mikhailovitch, that the—the person of whom you have told me, was to arrive here? I thought you were waiting for her ?”

“Yes, but I shall write to her. She can stop somewhere upon the road; at Heidelberg, for instance.”

“Oh! at Heidelberg—yes—very well. But that will disarrange your plans. Are

you sure, Gregory Mikailovitch, that you do not exaggerate, and that it is not a false alarm?"

Irene spoke calmly, almost coldly, and with slight pauses, keeping her eyes turned towards the window. Litvinof did not reply to her last question.

"Why did you speak of mortification?" she continued. "I am not hurt—oh no! And if either of us is guilty, it is not you; at least, it is not you alone. Recall our last conversation, and you will be convinced that it is not you who are guilty."

"I have never doubted your generosity," said Litvinof, between his teeth; "but I wish to know if you approve of my intention?"

"To go away?"

"Yes."

Irene continued to look away from him.

“At the first moment your intention appeared to me premature. Now I have reflected upon what you have said, and if you really do not mistake yourself, I suppose then it will be better for you to go away. It will be better—better for both of us.”

Irene spoke very slowly, and her voice became more and more feeble.

“In fact, General Ratmirof may observe —” began Litvinof.

Irene cast down her eyes; a strong quivering appeared around her mouth, which she made powerful efforts to master.

“No, you have not understood me,” she interrupted; “I was not thinking of my husband. Why should I? he has not remarked anything. But, I repeat, a separation is indispensable for both of us.”

Litvinof took up his hat, which had fallen to the floor.

“All is over,” he thought. “I must go. Then it only remains for me to take leave of you, Irene Pavlovna,” he said aloud; and his heart sank as though he had pronounced his own judgment. “I have nothing more to say, except that I hope you will not retain too bad an opinion of me, and that, if ever——”

Irene again interrupted him.

“Wait, Gregory Mikhailovitch, do not take leave of me; it would be too—precipitate.”

Litvinof gave a start, but his heart swelled with bitterness, and he felt a burning sensation upon his forehead.

“But why should I remain?” he exclaimed. “Why should I prolong this torment?”

“Do not leave me yet,” repeated Irene. “I must see you again. Another sudden

separation, like the one at Moscow ! No, I cannot consent to that. You may retire for the present, but promise me, give me your word of honour, that you will not go without having seen me once more."

" You desire it ? "

" I demand it. If you go away without seeing me, I will never, never pardon you ; —you understand, never ! It is very strange !" she added, as though to herself : " I cannot imagine that I am at Baden— I fancy that I am at Moscow—You had better go now."

Litvinof rose.

" Irene Pavlovna," said he, " give me your hand."

Irene shook her head.

" I have told you that I will not say adieu to you."

" It is not a sign of adieu that I ask."

Irene was about to hold out her hand, but she looked at Litvinof, for the first time after his confession, and drew it back.

“No, no,” she murmured, “I will not give you my hand. No, no, not now.”

Litvinof bowed and went out. He did not understand the refusal of Irene to give him a last friendly shake of the hand, he did not comprehend why she feared to do so. He left the room and closed the door behind him, and Irene fell back in her chair, and once more covered her face with her hands.

CHAPTER XVI.

LITVINOV did not return to his chambers ; he went upon the hills, and, penetrating a thicket, threw himself upon the ground with his face downward, and remained thus stretched out for more than an hour. He did not suffer, he did not weep ; a strange numbness, a melancholy torpor had come over him. He had never before felt anything like it ; it was an intolerable sense of void, of void within him, around him, everywhere.

He thought neither of Irene nor Tatiana.

He only felt one thing : the axe had struck him ; the rope which held him to the post was broken, and he felt himself seized by the waves and carried on through the freezing waters of some unknown sea, far from a reed to which he might cling, far from all hope of ever getting back to land.

Sometimes it seemed as though the vortex was closing over him, and he felt himself whirling deeper and deeper into the black abyss. Sometimes he clutched at his first resolution. He would decide at once. There should no longer be any question as to his departure from Baden. In thought, he was already upon the road ; he was sitting in the train as it thundered and steamed along, hurrying on, on, on ; but towards a land, barren and desolate, without one green spot in the vast horizon.

He got up at last; and, supporting his head against a tree, stood motionless, mechanically supporting himself by a bramble which he had grasped to keep himself from falling backwards. The sound of approaching footsteps aroused him from his stupor; two colliers, with enormous bags upon their shoulders, were coming down a rugged path.

“It is time,” murmured Litvinof.

He followed the colliers, hastened to the railway station, and sent a telegram to Tatiana’s aunt, Capitoline Markovna. He informed her of his immediate departure; and appointed to meet her and her niece at the Schrader Hotel, at Heidelberg.

“Since it must come to an end, I will make an end of it at once, and not put it off till to-morrow.”

After that he went into the gaming-room, stared at two or three of the players with almost vacant curiosity, observed in the distance the deformed occiput of Bindasof and the solemn face of Pitchtchalkin ; and after remaining for a few moments under the colonnade, proceeded, without hurrying, to Irene's hotel.

It was not a sudden and impulsive feeling which led him there : decided to go, he was equally decided to keep his word, and to see her for the last time. He therefore entered the hotel without being seen by the porter, and ran up-stairs without meeting anybody. He mechanically pushed open the door, and entered the drawing-room without knocking.

Irene was sitting in the same fauteuil, in the same dress, in the same posture. It was evident that she had not changed her

place, that she had not moved all that time. She slowly raised her eyes, and, seeing Litvinof, made a start, and grasped the arm of the chair.

“ You frightened me,” she murmured.

Litvinof considered her with mute surprise. The expression of her visage and the dimness of her eyes struck him. Irene made an effort to smile, and repaired the disorder of her hair.

“ It is nothing—I really do not know—I think I must have gone to sleep here,” she said.

“ Excuse me, Irene Pavlovna,” began Litvinof. “ I entered without being announced—I wanted to do as you wished me. As I am leaving this evening——”

“ This evening! But you told me, I thought, that you would write a letter first.”

“I have sent a telegram.”

“Oh! you think it urgent. And when do you go? I mean at what hour?”

“At seven o’clock.”

“Oh! at seven o’clock! And you have come to wish me good-bye?”

“Yes, Irene Pavlovna, to take leave of you.”

Irene remained silent.

“I must thank you, Gregory Mikhailovitch: it has probably cost you an effort to come here?”

“That is true, Irene Pavlovna; it has.”

“In general, life is not a pleasant thing, Gregory Mikhailovitch; what do you think?”

“That depends, Irene Pavlovna.”

Irene was once more silent; her thoughts seemed to be wandering.

“You have proved to me your friendship

in returning," she said, at length. "I thank you. In short, I approve of your intention to end all as soon as possible; because all delay—because—because I, whom you accuse of coquetry, whom you called an actress,—it was thus, I think, that you called me——"

Irene rose suddenly, and changing her seat, allowed her face to sink upon her hands on the edge of the table.

"Because I love you," she murmured, between her clasped fingers.

Litvinof staggered as though some one had struck him upon the chest. Irene turned her head, as though she wished to conceal her face from him, and laid it upon the table.

"Yes, I love you—and you know it."

"I! I know it!" exclaimed Litvinof.
"I!"

“Now, you see,” continued Irene, “that you must really go, that it is impossible to put it off—both for your sake and mine. It is dangerous, it is terrible——. Adieu!” she added, rising hurriedly from her chair. “Farewell!”

She took some steps in the direction of the door, and holding out her hand behind her, waved it in the air, as though she wished to encounter that of Litvinof; but he stood in his place as though he was rooted to the floor. She said once more, “Adieu! Forget!” and, without turning her head, disappeared.

Left alone, Litvinof had some difficulty in retaining his senses. He recovered at length, and hastily approaching the door through which she had disappeared, pronounced the name of Irene once, twice, three times. He already had hold of the

handle, when the sonorous voice of Ratmirof was heard upon the steps of the hotel.

Litvinof drew his hat over his eyes, and descended the stairs. The elegant general was standing before the porter's box, explaining in indifferent German that he should require a carriage for the whole of the morrow.

Perceiving Litvinof, he again raised his hat with profuse politeness, and once more presented to him his "respects." He was evidently mocking him; but Litvinof was thinking of other things. He hardly returned Ratmirof's bow, but hastened by, and regained his lodgings, where he sat down beside his box, which was already packed and corded.

His head was whirling, and his heart was trembling like a leaf. What was he to do now? Could he foresee?

Yes, he saw it all—his course was marked out; the interview had made no change in his determination. Incredible as it may seem, he had had an undefined presentiment of what had taken place. It had stunned him like a clap of thunder, but he had foreseen it, although he had not dared to acknowledge it to himself. Yet he was sure of nothing. All within him was mingled and confounded; he had lost the thread of his thoughts. He thought of Moscow—there also all had disappeared. He felt suffocated. A sense of triumph, of sterile triumph, oppressed and confused his mind.

Nothing in the world would have induced him to wish that the words which had escaped Irene should be recalled. But what then? Those words could not change his resolution. That resolution was not

wavering as it had been before, but firm as the anchor of a vessel. "And then die, if I must!" he said, as he had done during the last sleepless night. That phrase pleased him mightily. "And then die, if I must!" he repeated, as he walked round the room.

At times he closed his eyes, and ceased to breathe, as the words of Irene came like burning coals upon his mind. "Apparently one cannot love twice," he thought; "another life is blended with your own, and you cannot get rid of it; you cannot cure yourself of the sting—you can never escape from the first influence! Thus it is, but what does that prove? Happiness—Is it possible? You love her? and she—she loves you—." Here he was obliged to make a great effort over himself.

Like a traveller who, in a dark night,

sees before him a feeble light, and, fearing to go astray, does not dare for a moment to lose sight of the friendly beacon, Litvinof concentrated all the powers of his mind upon one object; to join his betrothed, or rather, not to join his betrothed (he tried not to think of that), but to reach the hotel at Heidelberg, where he had proposed to meet her—that was his lighthouse. What was to come after that he did not know, and did not want to know; there was only one thing certain, that he would not go back. “And then die if I must!” he repeated for the tenth time, as he consulted his watch. It was a quarter past six. As there was still some time to wait, he began to walk to and fro.

The sun was going down behind the trees, covering the sky with a crimson glow, and a red light stole through the

narrow windows into the room, which was gradually becoming darker and darker. Suddenly it seemed to Litvinof that the door was softly opened and closed again; he turned round, and saw a woman enveloped in a black cloak.

“Irene!” he exclaimed, clasping his hands.

She made a sign of the head, and her forehead sank upon the bosom of Litvinof.

An hour after this apparition, Litvinof was sitting alone upon his sofa. His box stood in a corner, open and empty; among a heap of objects in disorder upon a table lay a letter from Tatiana, which he had just received.

She informed him that, her aunt having completely recovered her health, she had decided to hasten her departure from Dresden, and that, if nothing happened to

prevent it, she expected to reach Baden on the following day; she added, that she hoped he would come to the station to meet them.

Apartments had been engaged by Litvinof at the same hotel at which he was stopping. The same evening he sent a note to Irene, and the following morning received a reply.

“Sooner or later,” she wrote, “it was inevitable. For myself, I repeat what I told you yesterday; my life is in your hands, do what you will with me. I leave you full liberty; but know that, if it should be necessary, I will leave all and follow you to the end of the world. We shall see each other again to-morrow, shall we not?

“IRENE.”

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG the persons assembled, at twelve o'clock on the 18th August, upon the platform of the railway station, may have been seen Litvinof. Some minutes previously, he had encountered Irene; she was in an open carriage with her husband and a gentleman of mature age. She saw Litvinof. There was a dark expression round her eyes; but she at once concealed herself from him with her parasol.

A remarkable change had taken place in him since the previous day; in all his

movements, in his walk, in the expression of his face, he appeared another man.

Confidence, quietude, self-respect, all were gone; there remained only the ruin of his moral structure; his recent and indelible impressions had masked his whole past existence. He experienced a sensation entirely new—intense, poignant, but detestable. A mysterious guest had entered the sanctuary, and there established himself in silence, making himself absolute master, like a person taking possession of a new dwelling.

Litvinof no longer felt shame; he was afraid; at the same time he was burning with desperate temerity. The vanquished, the prisoner, knows something of these mingled feelings, and perhaps the thief after his first crime. Now, Litvinof was

vanquished, vanquished unawares ; and what had now become of his honour ?

The train was some minutes late. The anxiety of Litvinof changed into mortal agony ; he could not rest in one place ; pale as a spectre, he mingled with the crowd, trying to lose himself. “Good heavens ! ” he thought ; “ if she should have put it off for a day.”

His first look at Tatiana, and the first look she cast upon him—that was what would try him—that was what he wanted to get over as soon as possible. And after that ? After that, come what may.

He made no resolution, he could no longer answer for himself. The phrase which he had so often repeated on the previous day came back to his mind. And this was the painful state of mind in which he had come to meet Tatiana.

A harsh whistle was heard at last, and the locomotive was seen slowly advancing. The crowd hurried to meet it, and Litvinof followed, staggering like a condemned wretch on his way to the scaffold.

The next moment faces could be distinguished in the carriages; and a white handkerchief waving from one of the windows drew his eyes upon Capitoline Markovna. This was the terrible moment; she had seen Litvinof, and—and he had recognized her.

The train stopped, and Litvinof sprang forward, and opened the door. Tatiana was standing close to her aunt, and with a limpid smile, held out her hand to him. He helped them to descend, muttering some commonplace words which he hardly understood himself, and immediately began to busy himself in taking their tickets, relieving them of their bags and shawls,

calling a porter, and retaining a cab. The crowd were shouting and bustling around him, and he felt secretly obliged to them for the noise they made.

Tatiana stood a little apart, and, without ceasing to smile, quietly awaited the termination of this feverish agitation. Capitoline Markovna, on the contrary, could not yet believe that she was at Baden. Suddenly she called out—

“Oh ! the umbrellas ! Tatiana, where are the umbrellas ?” forgetting that she had them under her arm ; then she turned round, and took a noisy farewell of a lady whose acquaintance she had made between Heidelberg and Baden.

That lady was no other than our friend Madame Soukhautchikof. She had been to pay a visit to Goubaref at Heidelberg, and was now returning.

Capitoline Markovna wore a rather remarkable cloak of many colours and a round travelling hat, in the shape of a mushroom, which did not conceal her grey hair, which was cut short like that of a child. Of middle height, slender, excited by her journey, and speaking Russian in a sharp and singing voice, she looked a sufficiently singular person, and attracted a number of eyes towards her.

Litvinof at last got them into the vehicle, and seated himself opposite them. The driver whipped the horse, and they were on their way to the hotel. Then came shaking of hands, smiles, and compliments, followed by a long string of questions.

Litvinof began to breathe; the first few moments had not been so badly passed. Nothing in him seemed to have surprised or troubled Tatiana. She still looked at

him full of serenity and confidence, blushing gracefully, and laughing with all her heart. He determined to look at her, not stealthily, but with a fixed look; his eyes had hitherto rebelled against him.

An involuntary compassion had seized his mind; and the expression of that calm and loyal face made him feel bitter remorse. "You have come here, poor girl! you whom I have expected so long," he thought, "whom I have asked to share my lot in life; you have come full of love and confidence in me, and I—— and I——." He bowed down his head, but Capitoline Markovna did not give him leisure to plunge into reverie, but overwhelmed him with questions.

"What building is that with the columns? Where is the place they gamble? Tatiana, Tatiana, look; what crinolines! Who is

that? There must be a great many people from Paris here? Good heavens, what a hat! Why they are all here just as in Paris! But I imagine everything is very dear? Oh! what an excellent and intelligent woman we met with! You know her, Gregory Mikailovitch; she told me that she had met you at the house of a Russian gentleman, a man of great talents and good sense. She promised to call and see us. How all these aristocrats dress! it is wonderful! Who is that gentleman with grey moustaches? The king of Prussia? Tatiana, Tatiana, look; that is the king of Prussia. No. It is not the king of Prussia. The ambassador of the Netherlands. I did not hear, for the wheels make so much noise. Oh! what beautiful trees!"

"Yes, aunt, they are splendid," observed Tatiana; "and how green and gay

everything looks. Does it not, Gregory Mikhailovitch?"

"Very gay," replied Litvinof, between his teeth.

The vehicle stopped before the hotel. Litvinof conducted the travellers to the apartments which he had engaged for them, and, promising to return in an hour, entered his own room. The moment he set his foot inside he was again seized by the magic charm which had been dissipated for a moment.

Irene had reigned in that room since the previous day, and every object there spoke of her. Litvinof felt himself more than ever her slave. He drew forth Irene's hand-kerchief, which he had concealed in his bosom, and put it to his lips, and a shiver ran through his veins like a subtle poison. He saw that there was no return, no choice:

the mournful compassion which had been aroused by the sight of Tatiana vanished like snow before the sun, and the voice of repentance was silenced, silenced so completely that he ceased to have any anxiety, and the necessity of practising deceit presented itself to his mind without causing any disgust.

To love Irene had become right in his eyes—his law, his conscience. He, formerly so prudent and reasonable, no longer even thought how he should escape from a position the horror and absurdity of which weighed very lightly upon him, and as though it concerned somebody else.

An hour had not passed, when a waiter brought a message from the new arrivals, begging him to come and join them in the common hall. He followed the messenger, and found them already dressed, and with

their bonnets on. Both expressed a desire to profit by the fine weather to cast a glance over Baden.

Capitoline Markovna particularly was burning with impatience, and she was even disposed to be angry when she was informed that it was not the hour at which fashionable people assembled before the *Conversationhaus*. Litvinof offered her his arm, and the official promenade commenced.

Tatiana walked by the side of her aunt, and gazed with quiet curiosity upon all around her, while Capitoline Markovna continued her questions.

They stopped and watched them play at roulette. At the sight of the croupiers, so *distingué* that, if she had seen them elsewhere, she would certainly have taken them for noblemen—at the sight of their little rakes, constantly in motion, the heaps of

gold upon the green cloth, and women, young and old, playing, Capitoline Markovna fell into mute ecstasies ; she forgot entirely that she ought to have been indignant, and had not enough eyes to look, trembling with excitement every time that the numbers were called. The humming of the ivory ball in the roulette penetrated to the marrow of her bones ; it was not till she got out into the open air that she found enough strength to heave a deep sigh, and call games of chance an immoral invention of the aristocracy.

An unpleasant smile played round Litvinof's lips ; he uttered his words carelessly and with jerks, seeming to be fatigued or annoyed. But as he turned towards Tatiana, he had considerable difficulty in keeping his countenance. She looked at him with attention, and seemed to be asking her-

self what kind of impression he made upon her. He occasionally made a sign of his head to her, to which she responded without ceasing to regard him with an interrogative look and with a certain anxiety, as though he had been farther from her than he really was.

Litvinof led the ladies from the *Conversationhaus*, and avoiding the "Arbre Russe," under which were seated two of his countrymen, walked towards the Allé de Lichtenthal. He had scarcely entered the walk when he saw Irene in the distance. She was advancing towards him with her husband and Potoughine.

Litvinof turned white as a sheet; however, he did not quicken his pace, and when they met, he made her a silent bow. She coldly inclined her head, and, after casting a scrutinizing glance upon Tatiana, passed on.

Ratmirof raised his hat very high, and Potoughine muttered something which was unintelligible to everybody but himself.

“Who is that lady?” inquired Tatiana, who hitherto had scarcely opened her lips.

“That lady?” repeated Litvinof; “that lady? her name is Ratmirof.”

“A Russian?”

“Yes.”

“You have made her acquaintance here?”

“No, I have known her for a long while.”

“How beautiful she is!”

“Did you notice her clothes?” said Capitoline Markovna. “That lace alone cost enough money to keep ten families for a whole year! Was that her husband with her?” she added, turning towards Litvinof.

“Yes, her husband.”

“He must be enormously rich?”

“I do not know, but I suppose he is.”

“And what is his position?”

“He is a general.”

“What eyes!” added Tatiana; “but they had a strange expression; they were dreamy and piercing at the same time; I never saw such eyes before.”

Litvinof made no reply; he still seemed to feel the inquisitive look of Tatiana upon his face, but he was deceived: she was looking down at the gravel of the path.

“Good gracious! who is this monster?” suddenly exclaimed Capitoline Markovna, pointing to a *pannier*, in which was listlessly reclining a woman with a turn-up nose, and dressed in a most gaudy costume.

“That monster? why that is no other than the famous Mademoiselle Cora.”

“Who?”

“Mademoiselle Cora, a celebrated Parisian lady.”

“What! that pug-nosed creature? Why, she is positively ugly.”

“That appears to have nothing to do with it.”

Capitone Markovna allowed her arms to fall. “Well, your Baden is a pretty place! May we sit down upon this seat? I feel rather tired.”

“Certainly, Capitone Markovna; the seats are placed here for that purpose.”

“How do I know your customs? I am told that in Paris there are seats placed upon the boulevards, but that it is not right to sit down upon them.”

Litvinof did not give himself the trouble

to enlighten Capitoline Markovna upon this point. He saw that they were in the same spot where the decisive explanation between himself and Irene had taken place, and was thinking that he had seen upon her cheeks a little rosy tint.

Capitoline Markovna took possession of the seat, Tatiana took a place by her side, and Litvinof remained standing in the path. Was it the effect of his imagination, or reality? It seemed to him that an indefinable something was gradually being interposed between himself and Tatiana.

“Oh! what a peacock!” went on Capitoline Markovna, shaking her head with compassion. “If her toilet was to be sold it would keep not only ten families, but a hundred. Did you see the diamonds upon her bonnet, and upon her red hair? Diamonds, in the morning!”

“She has not red hair,” observed Litvinof; “she has it thus because it is the fashion.”

Capitoline Markovna again made a gesture of astonishment, and began to reflect. “With us, at Dresden,” she continued, “they have not come to anything quite so scandalous as that. That is because we are farther from Paris. You share my opinion, do you not, Gregory Mikhailovitch?”

“I!” returned Litvinof, adding to himself, “What the deuce is she talking about? I? oh! of course, most decidedly.”

At that moment he heard a measured tread, and saw Potoughine approaching.

“Good day!” said he to Gregory Mikhailovitch, smiling and nodding his head.

Litvinof grasped his hand.

“Good day! good day! Sozouthe Ivano-

vitch; I think I just met you with—a moment ago, in the walk."

"Yes, it was I."

Potoughine bowed respectfully to the ladies, who kept their seats.

"Allow me to introduce you to my friends, relations who have just arrived from Dresden—Potoughine Sozouthe Ivavitch, a countryman of mine, also a visitor at Baden."

The two ladies bowed, and Potoughine again raised his hat.

"It is a perfect *raout*," began Capitoline Markovna, in a falsetto voice; the excellent old lady was somewhat bashful, but wished above all things not to show it. "Everybody seems to think it a duty to come here."

"Baden is, indeed, a very pleasant place to spend a short time at," replied Potou-

ghine, looking stealthily at Tatiana; "yes, a pleasant spot is Baden."

"Yes, only it is too aristocratic, so far as I can judge. We have been living at Dresden; it is a very interesting town, but here it is a perfect *raout*."

"That word seems to please her," thought Potoughine. "Your remark is very just," he said aloud; "but, on the other hand, nature is very splendid here, and the situation is the most picturesque that is to be found anywhere. Your companion especially must appreciate that. Is it not so, mademoiselle?" he added, addressing himself directly to Tatiana.

Tatiana fixed her large limpid eyes upon Potoughine. She seemed to be trying to understand what could have been the object of Litvinof in making her acquainted, on the very first day of her arrival, with this

stranger, who, however, seemed to have an honest and intelligent face, and who examined her with politeness and interest.

“Yes,” she replied, “it is very nice here.”

“You must pay a visit to the Old Château,” continued Potoughine; “and I advise you especially to go to Ibourg.”

“Swiss Saxony——,” began Capitoline Markovna.

At that moment there was a sound of music; it was the Prussian military band from Rastadt (in 1862 Rastadt was still a federal fortress), which was commencing its weekly concert in the pavilion.

Capitoline Markovna rose immediately.

“Music,” she said; “music *à la conversation*! We must go. It is now four o’clock; that is the fashionable hour, is it not?”

“Yes,” replied Potoughine; “this is the fashionable part of the day, and the music is excellent.”

“Then we must not delay; Tatiana, come along.”

“Will you permit me to accompany you?” asked Potoughine, to the great surprise of Litvinof, it never coming into his head that Potoughine could have been sent by Irene.

Capitoline Markovna smiled graciously. “With great pleasure, Monsieur——”

“Potoughine!” he said, offering his arm to her. Litvinof gave his to Tatiana, and the two couples hastened towards the *Conversationhaus*.

Potoughine continued to converse with Capitoline Markovna, and Litvinof to walk along without opening his mouth; twice only he smiled without any cause, and

slightly pressed the hand of Tatiana. There was falsehood in these squeezings of the hand, to which she did not respond, and Litvinof hated himself for that falsehood. He knew that they did not express the confidence of two souls who had given themselves to each other ; they merely took the place of words which would not come to his lips. That nameless something which had placed itself between them seemed to grow more palpable. Tatiana gazed at him again, with an attentive, almost scrutinizing look.

Seated at a small table in front of the *Conversationhaus*, no change took place in their situation, except that, amidst the noise of the crowd and the sound of the instruments, the silence of Litvinof appeared less extraordinary.

Capitone Markovna was quite beside

herself with excitement; Potoughine had the utmost difficulty in answering her questions and satisfying her curiosity. Fortunately for him, among the crowd of promenaders appeared the dry face of Madame Soukautchikof, with her eyes constantly ready to dart out of her head. Capitoline Markovna recognized her at once, and begged her to come and sit down at their table, and then there burst forth a veritable tempest of words.

Potoughine turned towards Tatiana, and began to converse with her in a slow and gentle voice, with an affable expression upon his face; and she, to her own surprise, answered him with perfect ease. She felt great pleasure in talking to this stranger, this man whom she had not known two hours before; while Litvinof sat, as before, motionless in his chair, with

the same faint and unpleasant smile upon his lips.

At length the dinner hour arrived, the music ceased, and the company began to disperse. Capitoline Markovna took an affectionate adieu of Madame Soukhautchikof. She held that lady in high esteem, although she afterwards said to her niece that that person was too enthusiastic, but that, on the other hand, she was acquainted with everything. And as for the sewing-machine, it would be necessary to procure one immediately after the marriage.

Potoughine retired, and Litvinof conducted the ladies back to the hotel. At the door a note was put into his hand; he moved on one side, and tore open the envelope. Upon a small sheet of paper these words were traced in pencil, "*Come to me at seven o'clock this evening for one*

minute ; I wish to speak to you." Litvinof crammed the paper into his pocket, and turning round, began to smile again—at whom? and why?

They dined at the table d'hôte. Litvinof was placed between Capitoline Markovna and Tatiana. He now began to talk, and to tell anecdotes, pouring himself out some wine, and seeing that the ladies wanted nothing. He had been seized all at once with strange animation, and spoke in so light a tone that an officer of some regiment of the line at Strasbourg, with moustaches *à la Napoléon*, who was sitting opposite him, took the liberty of taking part in the conversation, and ended by proposing a toast to *la santé des belles Moscovites !*

After dinner, Litvinof led the two ladies back to their room; he sat for a

moment, with a gloomy look, near the window ; and then abruptly declared that he should be obliged to absent himself for a short time upon business, but that he should return in the evening. Tatiana said nothing, but cast down her eyes and turned pale.

Capitoline Markovna was in the habit of taking a nap after dinner ; Tatiana knew that Litvinof was not ignorant of that fact, and she had hoped that he would take advantage of it, and that he would remain with her ; for he had not been a single moment alone with her since her arrival, and therefore had had no opportunity of speaking freely. And now he was going out. How was she to interpret that, and his conduct during the whole day ?

Litvinof hurriedly left the room, without waiting for a reply. Capitoline Markovna

lay down upon the divan, and, after having heaved two sighs, sunk peacefully to sleep ; Tatiana went into a corner, and sat down in a chair, with her arms crossed upon her bosom.

CHAPTER XVIII.

As Litvinof was mounting the stairs of the Hotel de l'Europe, a little girl of thirteen, with a saucy Kalmuck face, who was evidently looking out for him, stopped him, and said in Russian—

“Will you please to come in here? Irene Pavlovna will come to you directly.”

He looked at her with some hesitation. She smiled, and repeated her invitation; and then, introducing him into a small room, encumbered with boxes, situated

opposite the apartments of Irene, disappeared.

Litvinof had not had time to look about him when the same door opened abruptly, and gave admission to Irene, in a pink ball-dress, with pearls among her hair and round her neck. She took both his hands in hers, and remained some seconds without speaking ; her eyes glistened and her chest heaved, as though she had come up-stairs in a hurry.

“ I could not receive you in the drawing-room,” she began almost in a whisper ; we are just starting for a dinner-party. I wanted to see you for a moment. That was your intended with whom I met you this morning ?”

“ Yes, that was my intended,” replied Litvinof, emphasizing the word “ was.”

“ Well, I wanted to see you for a se-

cond, to tell you that you may consider yourself entirely free, and that what passed yesterday need not change your intentions."

"Irene!" exclaimed Litvinof, "why do you say that?"

He uttered these words in a loud voice and in a tone of intense passion.

Irene closed her eyes for a second.

"Ah!" she continued, still in a low voice, but with an irresistibly captivating manner, "you cannot tell how much I love you; but yesterday I only paid my debt, and repaired my fault. I cannot, as I could wish, give you my youth, but I imposed no obligation upon you, I bound you by no promise. Oh! my friend, do as you will; you are free as the air; nothing binds you to me; I have no wish to destroy your happiness!"

“But I cannot live without you, Irene,” murmured Litvinof; “I am yours for ever. I can only live at your feet.”

He stooped and kissed her hands, and Irene looked upon his bowed-down head.

“Understand, then,” she said, “that I also am ready for anything; I regret nothing; I care for no one but you. Whatever you decide upon shall be done. I also am yours—for ever.”

Somebody rapped at the door. Irene stooped and murmured once more, “Thine! adieu!”

Litvinof felt her breath pass over his forehead, but when he raised his head, she was no longer in the room. He could hear the rustling of her dress in the passage, and the voice of Ratmirof calling impatiently, “Well, are you not coming?”

Litvinof sat down upon a large box, and

as he put his hands to his face, he smelt a sweet and fresh perfume—Irene had taken his hand in hers. “This is too much,” he thought.

The little girl entered the room, and smiling again at his wild look, said to him, “Will you please to go now, before——”

He rose and quitted the hotel. How could he think of returning at once to his lodgings? it was necessary to regain his senses. His heart beat in a slow and unequal manner, and the ground seemed to move up and down beneath his tread, as he walked slowly up the Allé de Lichtenthal.

He saw that the decisive moment had arrived; that it was impossible to put it off, to practise deception, to have recourse to expedients; that an explanation with

Tatiana was inevitable ; but how was he to enter upon that explanation ?

He said adieu to all his future—happy and usefully laid out as it had seemed so recently ; he knew that he was casting himself head foremost over a precipice, and yet it was not that which troubled him. All that was decided ; but how was he to present himself before the judge ? And if he had had really to deal with a judge—with an angel wielding a blade of fire—his criminal heart would perhaps have bowed to the stroke, but here he had to plunge the knife into himself.

It was terrible ! He might still have gone back, profiting by the liberty which had been left him ; but no ! death was a thousand times preferable. Liberty ! of what use was that hateful liberty ? He could willingly have cast himself headlong

into the abyss, have dashed himself to atoms, provided those eyes were fixed upon him with love.

“Gregory Mikhailovitch!” said a mournful voice; and a hand was laid heavily upon his shoulder. He turned, not without terror, and saw Potoughine.

“Excuse me, Gregory Mikhailovitch,” began the latter, in his habitual manner; “I am disturbing you, perhaps; but, seeing you in the distance, I thought——. Besides, if you have anything else to do——”

“On the contrary, I am very pleased to meet you,” said Litvinof, between his teeth.

Potoughine walked by his side.

“What a beautiful evening!” he pursued; “how warm it is! Have you been walking long?”

“No, not very long.”

“But, what do I say? I saw you leave the Hotel de l’Europe.”

“And you followed me?”

“Yes.”

“Have you something to tell me?”

“Yes,” repeated Potoughine, but so low that he could scarcely be heard.

Litvinof stopped, and looked the interlocutor, who thus forced his company upon him, from head to foot. His visage was pale, and his look vague; and an old and incurable sorrow was visible upon his withered features.

“What have you to say to me particularly?” said Litvinof, slowly, as he went on with his walk again.

“Here—allow me—I will tell you at once. If you don’t mind, we will sit down here; we shall be more to ourselves.”

“Then it is something mysterious?” said Litvinof, taking a place beside his companion. “You are not in your ordinary humour, Sozouthe Ivanovitch.”

“No, there is nothing the matter with me, and I have nothing secret to say to you; I merely wanted to confide to you—the impression which your future wife made upon me—for that is the lady with whom you made me acquainted to-day, is it not? I must acknowledge that I have never in the whole course of my life met with a being who inspired me with more respect and confidence. She has a heart of gold, the soul of an angel.”

Potoughine uttered all these words in a sad and bitter tone, so that Litvinof himself noticed the contradiction there was between his expression and his language.

“You estimate Tatiana Petrovna perfectly,” he said; “but I have reason to be surprised, in the first place, at your being so well informed respecting my relations with her; and secondly, how you have so soon read her disposition. She has indeed an angelic soul, but permit me to ask you if it is of that you wish to speak to me.”

“It is impossible not to understand her at once,” Potoughine hastened to say, apparently avoiding the last question; “it is only necessary to look in her eyes. She deserves all possible happiness. Enviable will be the lot of the man who is destined to procure her that happiness! It is to be hoped that he will show himself worthy of such a lot.”

Litvinof slightly contracted his brows.
—“Excuse me, Sozouthe Ivanovitch, I

think our conversation somewhat strange —I should like to know if the allusion contained in your last words applies to me?"

Potoughine did not reply for some moments: it was evident that a struggle was going on within him.

"Gregory Mikhailovitch," said he at length. "Oh! if I am not entirely mistaken in you, you are capable of listening to the truth, however painful may be the aspect under which it presents itself; I must tell you that I saw where you came from."

"Well, yes, from the Hotel de l'Europe. What then?"

"I know whom you have seen there."

"Well, I have been with Madame Rat-mirof. What then?"

"What then! You are engaged to

Tatiana Petrovna, and you have been to see Madame Ratmirof, who is in love with you—and whom you love in return."

Litvinof sprang from his seat, the blood rushing into his face.

"What is that?" he said, in a hollow and passionate voice; "is that a very poor jest? or have you been acting the spy? Have the goodness to explain yourself."

Potoukhine cast a melancholy look towards him.

"Oh! do not let my words offend you, Gregory Mikhailovitch. For myself, you cannot wound me; I am not in the mood for jesting."

"That may be, that may be; I am very willing to believe in the purity of your intentions; at the same time, you must allow me to ask by what right you interfere with my private affairs—with the love

affairs of a stranger? And upon what foundation you present, with so much assurance, your—your invention as a fact?"

"My invention! If I had invented this you would not have been angry. As to what you call the right, I have never before heard a man put such a question: have I or have I not the right to stretch out my hand to a man who is drowning himself?"

"I am deeply touched by the interest which you take in me," interrupted Litvinof, "but I do not require it; and all those phrases about the ruin into which women lead young inexperienced men, about the immorality of fashionable life, et cætera, I take only for phrases, and despise them to a certain degree. Therefore I must request you not to tire yourself with attempts to save me, but to allow me to drown myself in peace."

Potoughine once more raised his eyes to Litvinof; he breathed painfully, and his lips trembled.

“Now look at me, young man,” he said, after a moment, placing his hand upon his chest; “do I look like a pedantic moralist, a preacher? Can you not understand that it is not my sympathy for you, however deep that may be, that urges me to speak to you thus, and to give you cause to suspect me of that which I abhor more than anything else in the world—indiscretion and impertinence? Cannot you see that here the affair is quite of another kind, that you have before you a man broken, destroyed, irremediably prostrated, by the same sentiment from which he is seeking to preserve you and—by the same woman!”

Litvinof took a step backwards.

“Is it possible? What do you say? You—you—Sozouthe Ivanovitch? But Madame Belsky? and that child——”

“Oh! do not question me. It is a dark, a terrible story, which I will not attempt to relate to you. I scarcely knew Madame Belsky, and that child is not mine; I took it all upon myself because she wished it—because it was necessary for *her*. But for her, should I be in your insupportable Baden? Do you believe, can you suppose for one moment, that through sympathy for you alone I have decided to warn you? I pity that good, that beautiful young girl, whom you have deceived. After all, what has your future to do with me? But I fear for her—I am alarmed for her.”

“You do me much honour, M. Potoughine,” said Litvinof; “but as, according to your own words, we find ourselves in

an identical position, why do you not apply your fine precepts to yourself, and may I not attribute your alarm to another feeling?"

"Jealousy, you mean? Ah! young man, young man, you ought to be ashamed to say that; you ought to be ashamed not to see the bitter grief which is now speaking to you by my mouth. No, we are not in an identical position. I, an eccentric old fellow, ridiculous, but inoffensive—and you! But what is the use of disputing? You would not consent for one moment to take the *rôle* which I am playing, and which I play with gratitude. Jealousy? He who has not one shade of hope, is not jealous; I am not going to commence that now. I am only afraid—afraid for her—do you understand that? But could I have expected, when she requested me to take

you to her, that the sense of what she called her fault would carry her so far?"

"But excuse me, Sozouthe Ivanovitch, you seem to know——"

"I know nothing, and yet I know all. I know," he added, turning round, "I know where she went yesterday. It is useless to try to stop her now; she is a stone which will keep rolling to the end. I should have been as mad as she is, if I had supposed that my words would restrain you—you to whom such a woman——. But I have said enough. I could not help speaking to you; that is my only excuse. Besides, how could I tell? Why should I not do my best to save you? Perhaps you will reflect; perhaps one of my words may sink into your heart; perhaps you will hesitate to destroy her, as well as that young creature, so innocent, so amiable. Oh! do not be angry, do

not stamp your foot. What cause have I to fear? why should I not speak plainly? It is neither jealousy nor any ill-feeling which is speaking within me at this moment. I am ready to fall at your knees and entreat you, if that would avail. But adieu! Have no uneasiness; all that has passed will remain between ourselves. I have spoken for your good."

Potoughine hurried away down the walk, and soon disappeared in the increasing darkness; Litvinof did not attempt to retain him.

"My history is a terrible and obscure one," Potoughine had said to Litvinof; and he had refused to relate it. We will tell it in a few words.

Eight years previously, his duties had attached him temporarily to the person of Count Reisenbach. It was during the sum-

mer. Potoughine brought papers to him to his country seat, and passed whole days there. Irene was then living with the count. She was never haughty towards inferiors; more than once, indeed, the countess had scolded her for what she considered an unbecoming Moscovite familiarity.

Irene soon discovered a man of sense and more than usual abilities in this modest *employé*, muffed up in a shabby coat which buttoned up to the chin. She frequently took great pleasure in conversing with him, and before long he was smitten with her passionately, profoundly, mysteriously. Mysteriously ! *he* thought so.

The summer rolled past, and the count no longer had need of an assistant. Potoughine lost sight of Irene, but did not forget her. Three years afterwards, a lady with whom he was very slightly acquainted invited him

to come and see her. This lady, after a thousand circumlocutions, and after having made him swear that he would keep what she was going to confide to him a most profound secret, proposed to him to espouse a person in an elevated position, to whom marriage had become a necessity. She scarcely dared to make allusion to the principal person of the story, but promised Potoughine money—a large sum of money. Potoughine did not take offence at the proposal, for surprise completely overcame his anger; but, very naturally, he at once gave a flat refusal. The negotiatress then placed in his hand a note from Irene.

“You are a good and honourable man,” she wrote; “I am aware that you would do much for me; I ask of you this sacrifice. You will save a being who is very dear to me; and in saving her you will save me

also. Do not seek to know more. There is no other person in the world of whom I should have decided to make such a request; but to you I hold out my hand and say, Do this for my sake."

Potoughine reflected, and declared that he was indeed capable of doing much for Irene Pavlovna, but that he should prefer to see her and receive the request from herself.

The interview took place the same evening; it was not prolonged, and was known to no one but themselves and the lady at whose house they met. Irene was no longer living with Count Reisenbach.

"What made you think of me?" asked Potoughine.

She began to enlarge upon his solid qualities, then suddenly interrupted herself.

"No," she said, "no, I will not conceal

the truth from you. I know that you love me, that was what decided me."

Then she told him all.

Elise Belsky was an orphan; her relations hated her, having reckoned upon her fortune; she had been imprudent, and marriage or utter ruin lay before her.

Potoughine looked at Irene for some time in silence, and at last consented. Then she burst into tears and threw herself upon his neck; and he wept also—but his tears were different.

The preparations for a secret union were just completed, a powerful hand having removed all obstacles, when the lady was taken ill: a child came into the world, and the mother poisoned herself. What was to be done with this child? Potoughine took it under his charge from the hands of Irene.

A melancholy, a frightful history ! But let us pass on, reader, let us pass on.

An hour expired before Litvinof could decide to go back to his hotel. He had nearly arrived, when he suddenly heard footsteps behind him; somebody appeared to be following him, and to quicken their pace when he walked faster. As he passed a lamp, Litvinof turned and recognized General Ratmirof.

The general was returning alone from the dinner party, in a white tie, an elegant paleot thrown over his shoulders, and a bunch of crosses attached by a gold chain to the buttonhole of his coat. His stare, directly and impertinently fixed upon Litvinof, expressed such contempt and hatred, and his whole physiognomy wore such evident defiance, that Litvinof determined to

face him. But, at the sight of Litvinof standing in the road waiting for him to approach, the face of the general changed suddenly; his sarcastic courtesy returned, and a hand covered with a pearl-grey glove raised an irreproachable felt hat.

Litvinof raised his without speaking, and each passed on his way.

“He suspects something,” thought Litvinof.

“Yes, he is——another!” said the general to himself.

Tatiana was playing at piquet with her aunt when Litvinof entered their room.

“You are a nice young gentleman!” exclaimed Capitoline Markovna, throwing the cards down upon the table; “here, we have lost you the very first day, and for the whole evening! We have waited and waited, then scolded and scolded.”

“I did not say anything, aunt,” observed Tatiana.

“Oh! you are well known for your patience! Are you not ashamed of yourself, sir? Is it possible? For a young man about to be married too!”

Litvinof excused himself as well as he could, and approached the table.

“Why did you interrupt your game?” he inquired, after a short silence.

“What a question! We only began to play because we were tired of waiting, and did not know what to do. Now you are come——”

“If you would like to go to the evening concert,” interrupted Litvinof, “I shall be very happy to take you.”

Capitoline Markovna consulted the eye of her niece.

“If you like, aunt, I am ready,” said the

latter; "but would it not be better to remain at home?"

"Very well; we will have tea in our own style, in the Muscovite style, with a samovar, and we will have a pleasant chat; we have not yet had time to have a nice chat together."

Litvinof ordered tea to be brought in, but the conversation was not such a success as the samovar. He felt a perpetual remorse gnawing at his conscience. It seemed to him as though there was a lie in every word he spoke, and fancied that Tatiana must see it. Yet there was no visible change in her; only her eyes never rested for a single moment upon Litvinof, but glided round him with a sort of timid compassion, and she was paler than usual.

Capitoline Markovna asked her if she had not a headache.

Tatiana was about to reply negatively; but, after reflecting a moment, she said, "Yes, a little."

"It is caused by the fatigue of the journey," remarked Litvinof, turning very red as he spoke.

"Yes, I am a little tired," replied Tatiana; and her regard once more wandered about him.

"You must take a good rest, Tanioucha."

"I shall go to bed early, aunt."

The 'Guide des Voyageurs' was upon the table. Litvinof opened it, and began to read in a low voice the description of the environs of Baden.

"All that is delightful," interrupted Capitoline Markovna; "but there is one thing we must not forget. They say linen goods are very cheap here; we must buy some for the trousseau."

Tatiana cast down her eyes.

“ We shall have plenty of time for that, aunt. You never think of yourself, and you want a new dress very badly. You see how gaily they dress here.”

“ Ah ! my gracious ! what is the use ? Am I a fine lady ? It would be another thing if I were a beauty, like your friend, Gregory Mikhailovitch ; what do you call her ? ”

“ What friend ? ”

“ Why, the lady we met this morning.”

“ Oh ! she ? ” said Litvinof, with assumed indifference ; and again he felt his cheeks burn, and moved uneasily in his seat. “ No, it cannot go on like this,” he added to himself.

He was sitting by the side of his intended bride, and in his side-pocket, close to his heart, was the handkerchief of Irene. Capi-

toline Markovna went for a minute into the adjoining chamber.

“Tania,” said Litvinof, with an effort. It was the first time during the day that he had called her thus.

She turned towards him.

“I have—I have something very serious to say to you.”

“Oh! really? When? At once?”

“No, to-morrow.”

“Oh! to-morrow. Very well.”

A feeling of profound pity filled Litvinof’s mind. He took the hand of Tatiana, and held it to his lips with compunction, like a criminal. That kiss did not gladden her at all, it only made her heart sink.

During the night Capitoline Markovna, who was sleeping in the same chamber with her niece, suddenly sprang up in bed.

“Tania,” she said, “you are crying?”
Tatiana did not reply immediately.
“No, aunt,” she replied, in her candid
voice, “I have taken a little cold.”

CHAPTER XIX.

“WHY did I say that to her?” thought Litvinof the next morning, as he sat at the window in his room; and he shrugged his shoulders with vexation. He had said that to Tatiana, so as to cut off all retreat. Before him lay a note from Irene; she desired him to come to her at twelve o’clock.

The words of Potoughine came unceasingly to his memory; they had a discordant echo, although feeble and subterranean, as it were; they irritated him, and

yet he could not get rid of them. Somebody rapped at the door.

“*Wer da?*” demanded Litvinof

“Oh! you are at home; open the door!” the sepulchral voice of Bindasof was heard to say.

The handle of the door creaked. Litvinof turned pale with rage. “I am not at home,” he shouted.

“What do you mean by saying that you are not at home? What sort of a joke do you call that?”

“You were told that I could not be seen; take yourself off!”

“Well, that’s polite!—and I had come to borrow a little money of him,” growled Bindasof.

However, he went down stairs, stamping according to his habit. Litvinof was very near running after him, for he felt an al-

most uncontrollable desire to twist the insolent fellow's neck.

The events of the last few days had deranged his nerves: it would not have taken much more to have made him sit down and weep. He drank a glass of cold water, locked all his drawers without motive, and went to Tatiana's apartments.

He found her alone; Capitoline Markovna was gone to make some purchases. Tatiana was sitting upon a couch, holding with both hands a book which she was not reading, and of which she probably did not know the title. She did not move, but her heart throbbed violently, and he could see that the white collar which surrounded her neck moved up and down under her painful emotion.

He himself was very much agitated. Nevertheless he took a seat by her side, and

wished her good morning, with a smile which she returned in silence. She had already bowed to him on his entrance with more politeness than affection, and without looking at him. He held out his hand ; she yielded her icy fingers to his grasp, but immediately withdrew them, and again took up her book.

Litvinof felt that he should only give pain to Tatiana by commencing a conversation upon any ordinary subject ; as usual, she exacted nothing, but her whole manner seemed to say, “I am waiting, I am waiting.”

It was necessary to fulfil his promise. Now, although he had thought of nothing else all night, he had not prepared a single sentence, and really did not know how to break the cruel silence.

“Tania,” he began at last, “I told you yesterday that I had something very

serious to tell you. I am ready, only I beg you not to trouble about it, and to believe that my feelings for you——”

¶ His courage failed him, and he paused. Tatiana did not move—did not even look at him; but she grasped the book more tightly.

“Between us,” he continued, without finishing his sentence, “there has always existed perfect candour; I respect you too much to think of deceiving you; I wish to prove to you that I know how to appreciate the elevation and the independence of your character, and although, no doubt——”

“Gregory Mikhailovitch,” began Tatiana in a calm voice, while a deadly paleness overspread her countenance, “I will come to your assistance: you have ceased to love me, and you do not know how to tell me so.”

Litvinof started.

“Why,” he asked, in a voice which was scarcely audible, “why have you thought that? I really do not understand——”

“What! is it not true? Tell me, tell me.”

Tatiana turned towards Litvinof; her hair was thrown back, her face almost touched his, and her eyes, which had not rested upon him for so long, were plunged into his.

“Is it not true?” she repeated.

He said nothing—not a sound would come from his lips. He could not have lied at that moment, even if he had been certain that he would be believed, and that the lie would have served him; he could not even sustain the gaze of his companion. Besides, Tatiana did not need a reply, she found it in his silence, in his guilty down-

cast eyes ; and she threw herself back, and allowed the book to fall. Until that moment she had doubted, and Litvinof well knew that ; he now saw how really hideous was all that he had done, and he threw himself upon his knees.

“Tatiana !” he cried, “ if you knew how painful it is to me to see you in this state ; how I suffer to think that I—I—my heart is broken. I do not recognize myself ; in losing you I lose myself, and all—all is destroyed, Tatiana,—all ! Oh ! could I have foreseen that I should deal you such a blow ; you, my best friend, my guardian angel !—Could I have foreseen that we should find ourselves thus—that we should ever spend such a day as we spent yesterday !”

Tatiana was about to retire, but he caught hold of her dress.

“No, listen to me for one moment. You see I am at your feet, but I am not going to implore your pardon. You cannot—you ought not to grant me that; I am here to tell you that your friend is lost, that he is rolling headlong into the abyss, and does not wish to drag you along with him. Save me—no! You cannot save me. I must repulse you; I am lost, Tatiana, irrevocably lost!”

Tatiana looked at Litvinof.

“You are lost?” she said, as though she did not understand. “You are lost?”

“Yes, Tatiana, I am lost. All that has gone before, all that was dear to me, all that has hitherto constituted my life is destroyed and uprooted; and I know not what awaits me in the future. No, Tatiana, I have not ceased to love you, but another feeling, a terrible and irresistible passion has

taken possession of me. I resisted as long as I could——”

Tatiana rose, her brows contracted, and her pale face grew dark. Litvinof also got up.

“You love another woman,” she said; “and I guess who that woman is. We met her yesterday, did we not? Well, I know now what remains to be done. As you confess yourself that the feeling is irresistible”—(Tatiana made a pause; perhaps she still hoped that Litvinof would not allow that word to pass without protesting against it, but he said nothing)—“it only remains for me to give you back —your promise.”

Litvinof bowed his head with resignation, as though he had received a merited blow.

“You have a right to be indignant,” he stammered; “you have perfect right to accuse me of baseness and falsehood.”

Tatiana looked at him once more.

“I do not accuse you, Litvinof; I do not condemn you. I agree with you that the most bitter truth is preferable to such a day as we passed yesterday. What a life would ours have been!”

“What a life will mine be now!” said Litvinof, within himself.

Tatiana went towards the door of her bedroom.

“I beg you to leave me alone for a short time, Gregory Mikhailovitch. We shall see each other again; we shall talk to each other again. All this has come so unexpectedly! I must collect my strength. Leave me. Let me master my pride. We shall see each other again.”

And, with these words, Tatiana hastily retired, locking the door behind her.

Quite stunned, Litvinof staggered out

into the street; something black and heavy was dragging at the roots of his heart; the man who has strangled another must experience some such sensation; and at the same time he felt lighter, as though he was glad that the horrible deed was accomplished.

The generosity of Tatiana had overwhelmed him; he actually felt all that he had lost, and a bitter vexation was mingled with his remorse. He was attracted towards Irene as the only refuge that remained to him, and yet he felt his anger aroused against her.

Every day Litvinof's feelings were becoming more complex and more tangled; and these feelings tortured and embittered his mind more and more the farther he strayed into the chaos. He no longer had any taste for anything, and felt but one

anxiety ; to follow some course, whatever it might be, which would lead him out of this semi-obscurity.

Matter-of-fact men like Litvinof should never abandon themselves to passion ; it overturns their judgment and sweeps away every object and desire in life. But nature does not yield to logic, our human logic ; it has a way of its own, which we do not understand, which we do not recognize, until we feel ourselves crushed beneath its influence as beneath a wheel.

After leaving Tatiana, Litvinof had but one idea—to see Irene.

He went to her hotel, but the general was at home ; at least so the porter told him. He dared not go in, for he felt that he no longer had the power to command himself, so he left and sauntered about the *Conversationhaus*. Vorochilof

and Pichtchalkin felt the effect of Litvinof's ill-humour that day ; he did not conceal from the one that he was as empty as a bell, and from the other that he was as dull as a rainy day ; fortunately Bindasof did not fall into his clutches, for if he had, there would have been some grosser scandal.

Those two gentlemen did not resent the insult ; Vorochilof went so far as to ask himself whether military honour did not demand satisfaction, but, like the officer of Gogol, he calmed himself by stuffing himself at the *Butter-Brod Café*.

Litvinof saw Capitoline Marcovna in the distance, running about from shop to shop, in her many-coloured cloak ; and he felt ashamed of the pain he was about to occasion the ridiculous, but excellent old lady.

All at once something impalpable, but intense, seemed to touch him ; if a breath could have come from a passing shadow, it could not have been more imperceptible. Litvinof felt, however, at once that it was Irene approaching ; and, in fact, she appeared some steps from him, giving her arm to another lady. Their eyes met directly. Irene probably remarked something strange in the face of Litvinof ; she stopped before a bazaar of clocks from the Black Forest, beckoned to him by a sign of the head, and pointing out one of the clocks, as though she wanted him to admire the case, said in her ordinary voice, as though she was finishing a sentence already begun—

“Come in an hour, I shall be alone.”

At that moment, the famous Monsieur Verdier came running after her, and at

once fell into ecstasies over the colour of her dress, and a little Spanish hat, which came down to her eyebrows. Litvinof disappeared among the crowd.

CHAPTER XX.

“GREGORY,” said Irene to him, two hours later, “what is the matter with you? Tell me at once, while we are alone.”

“There is nothing the matter with me,” returned Litvinof; “I am happy, that is all.”

Irene cast down her eyes, smiled, and sighed.

“That is no answer,” she said.

Litvinof became pensive.

“Well, since you will have a reply, I must tell you” (the eyes of Irene opened

wide, and she drew herself slightly backward), "that I have to-day broken off with the young lady to whom I was engaged."

"What, entirely? Did you mention my name?"

Litvinof gave a start.

"Irene, how could such a thought have come into your mind? That I——"

"Pardon me, pardon me. What did you tell her then?"

"I told her that I no longer loved her."

"And she asked you the reason?"

"I did not conceal from her that I loved another woman, and that we must part."

"Well, did she consent?"

"Ah! Irene, what a young lady that is! What self-denial, and what nobleness!"

"I believe it, I believe it; besides, there was no other course left to her."

“ And not a single reproach, not a single bitter word to the man who had broken up her life; who had deceived her, who had cast her aside without pity ! ”

Irene attentively examined her nails.

“ Tell me, Gregory, did she love you ? ”

“ Yes, Irene, she did love me.”

Irene remained silent, and arranged her dress.

“ I confess,” she continued, “ that I do not perfectly understand why you should have been so anxious to explain yourself to her.”

“ What ! Why not, Irene ? Would you have wished me to act a falsehood, to feign an affection which I did not feel, before that pure soul ? Or do you suppose—— ”

“ I suppose nothing,” interrupted Irene. “ I acknowledge that I have thought very little about her ; I do not know how to think of two beings at once.”

“ You mean to say——”

“ Is she going away, this pure soul ? ”
again interrupted Irene.

“ I do not know,” responded Litvinof.
“ I am to see her again, but she will not
remain.”

“ A pleasant journey to her ! ”

“ No, she will not remain. Besides, I
think no more of her now ; I only think of
what *you* have said to me, and what *you*
have promised me.”

Irene cast a sidelong glance at him.

“ Ungrateful ! are you not yet content ? ”

“ No, Irene, I am not content, and you
understand me.”

“ That is to say, I——”

“ Yes, you understand me. Remember
what you said to me, and what you wrote
to me. I cannot share you with another,
I cannot consent to play a pitiful part

after all; I have renounced all, I have trampled all in the dust, without regret or hope of recovery; but in return, I believe, I firmly believe, that you will keep your promise, that you will unite your fate with mine."

"You wish me to fly with you? I am ready"—(Litvinof grasped her hand and covered it with kisses)—"I am ready, I shall not withdraw my word. But have you thought of the obstacles? Have you arranged the means?"

"I? I have thought of nothing yet; I have prepared nothing; but only speak one word, promise me to act, and before a month has expired——"

"A month! We are leaving in fifteen days for Italy."

"Fifteen days will suffice. Oh! Irene! you appear to receive my proposal coldly,

it seems to you a dream. However, I am not a child, and am not in the habit of filling my head up with chimeras. I know how terrible a step it is, and understand the responsibility I take upon myself; but I see no other course. Consider, besides, that I am obliged to break off all my connections with the past, in order not to appear a contemptible liar in the eyes of that young girl whom I have offered up to you as a holocaust."

Irene suddenly drew herself up, and her eyes flamed.

"Excuse me, Gregory Mikhailovitch; if I decide, if I fly, I will fly with a man who will do that for my sake, and not because he fears to sink in the opinion of a phlegmatic girl, who has milk and water in her veins, instead of blood! I confess that it is the first time I have ever heard that he

who is the object of my attention is deserving of pity, and that he plays a pitiful part! I know a part still more pitiful, it is that of a man who does not know what is passing in his own mind."

Litvinof rose in his turn.

"Irene," he began——

But she put her hand to her forehead, and, abruptly throwing herself upon his neck, clasped her arms round him with a force which was not that of a woman.

"Forgive me," she said, in a faltering voice, "forgive me, Gregory. You see what a spoiled, naughty, jealous, wicked child I am; you see how much I need your help and your indulgence. Yes, save me; draw me out of the gulf before I am completely swallowed up. Yes, let us escape; let us fly from these people and from this place; let us go to some beautiful country,

where we shall be far away and free. Do not be angry with me; forgive me, and believe that I will do whatever you command, and go wherever you will lead me."

Irene did not let go her embrace of Litvinof. He felt the pressure of that young and flexible form upon his bosom. He bowed his head over her beautiful locks, and pressed his lips upon her forehead, as their hearts beat against each other with wild delight.

"Irene, Irene," he exclaimed.

Presently she raised her head and listened.

"It is my husband's step; he has gone into his room," she said softly, and, retiring in haste, sat down in a chair.

Litvinof attempted to rise——

"Where are you going?" she continued,

in a low voice. "Remain, he suspects you already. At least do not let him think you are afraid of him."

She did not take her eyes from the door.

"Yes, it is he; he is coming now. Tell me something; speak to me."

Litvinof could not recover himself so suddenly, and remained silent.

"Are you not going to the theatre to-morrow?" she added, aloud. "They will play *Le Verre d'Eau*, an old piece, in which Plessis makes horrible grimaces. This is fever——" she added, lowering her voice. "It cannot go on thus long; but we must take our measures well. I must warn you that he has all my money; but I have my jewels. We will go to Spain, shall we?" She again raised her voice. "How is it all those actresses grow so stout? Even

Madeline Brohan——. Speak ; do not remain silent. My head is swimming, but do not doubt me. I will let you know where you can meet me to-morrow. Only it was not necessary to have told that girl——. *Ah ! mais c'est charmant !*" she exclaimed suddenly, and, beginning to laugh nervously, she tore the lace of her handkerchief.

" May I come in ?" inquired Ratmirof, from the other room.

" You may ; yes, open the door."

The door was opened, and the general appeared. At the sight of Litvinof, his brows contracted ; however, he bowed, or rather he balanced the upper part of his body.

" I did not know you had a visitor," he said ; " I beg pardon for my indiscretion. Are you still enjoying yourself at Baden, *Monsieur Litvinof ?*"

Ratmirof always pronounced this family

name with hesitation ; he seemed to be afraid that he had forgotten it, and anxious not to make a mistake. He fancied in all probability that he annoyed Litvinof by this pretended want of memory, as well as by the extravagant salute he addressed to him every time they met.

“I find plenty to amuse me, *M'sieu—le général.*”

“Really ? For my part, I am sick of Baden ; we shall soon be leaving, shall we not, Irene Pavlovna ? We have had enough of Baden. But I must tell you, I have won five hundred francs to-day upon your chance.”

Irene coquettishly held out her hand.

“Where is it ? You must give it me for pin-money.”

“Presently, presently. Are you going already, *M'sieu Litvinof?*”

“Yes, I am going, as you see.”

Ratmirof once more balanced his bust.

“I hope soon to have the pleasure of seeing you again.”

“Good-by, Gregory Mikhailovitch,” said Irene; “I shall keep my promise.”

“What promise, may I ask?” inquired her husband.

Irene smiled.

“No; it is a trifle—between ourselves. *C'est à propos du voyage—où il vous plaira.* You know—Stahl's book?”

“Oh! yes, oh! yes! I know! There are some splendid vignettes in it.”

And Ratmirof smiled lovingly at his wife.

CHAPTER XXI.

“I WILL try not to think of it,” repeated Litvinof to himself, as he walked along the street and felt the tumult rising within him again. “The thing is decided. She will keep her promise, and I have now nothing to do but to make the necessary preparations. Yet, she seemed to hesitate.” He shook his head. His resolutions appeared to his own mind in a fantastic light; they seemed to him forced and improbable. One cannot long turn over the same thoughts, for insensibly they become modified as they

pass through the mind ; it is like a kaleidoscope in which the figures are constantly changing, and little by little. Litvinof was overcome with extreme fatigue. He would have been glad to rest for at least an hour —but Tania ?

He shuddered, and without thinking more than he was compelled to do, reached the hotel ; he seemed to be bounding from one to the other like a ball that day. But it would soon be over.

He ran up to Tatiana without hesitation, almost without emotion. Capitoline Markovna came to meet him. At the first glance he saw that she knew all : the eyes of the poor old woman were swollen, and her burning cheeks expressed indignation, agony, and stupefaction. She was about to spring towards Litvinof, but checked herself, and, biting her trembling lips, looked

at him as though she wanted to implore him, and scold him, and convince herself that all this was a dream, a madness, a thing impossible, all in a breath.

“You have come, then! you have come!” she exclaimed.

The door of the adjoining room opened, and Tatiana, pale but very calm, entered noiselessly. She gently took the hand of her aunt, and sat down by her side.

“Take a seat, Gregory Mikhailovitch,” she said to Litvinof, who remained like a statue at the door. “I am very happy to see you once more. I have communicated to aunt my decision, our decision, and she approves of it entirely. Without mutual love there could be no happiness: respect is not sufficient” (at the word *respect* Litvinof winced involuntarily), “and it is far better for us to part now than to

have to repent afterwards. Is it not so, aunt?"

"Of course," commenced Capitoline Markovna. "Of course, Tanioucha; he who does not know how to appreciate you, he who has decided——"

"Aunt," said Tatiana, suddenly interrupting, "recollect what you promised me. You have always said to me yourself, 'Truth, Tatiana; truth before all; and liberty.' Well, the truth is not always agreeable, neither is liberty; if they were, where would be our merit?"

She affectionately kissed the white locks of Capitoline Markovna, and, turning towards Litvinof, continued—

"We have determined, aunt and myself, to leave Baden—it will be better for all."

"When do you think of going?" inquired Litvinof, in a hollow voice.

He recollects that Irene had put the same question to him. Capitoline was about to reply, but Tatiana prevented her, and gently patted her cheek.

“Probably soon; as early as possible.”

“Will you allow me to inquire where you intend to go?” continued Litvinof, in the same tone of voice.

“In the first place to Dresden, then to Russia.”

“But why do you want to know that now, Gregory Mikhailovitch?” demanded Capitoline Markovna, sharply.

“Aunt!” again said Tatiana.

There was a short silence, which was broken by Litvinof.

“Tatiana Petrovna, you can understand what painful and sorrowful feelings I experience at this moment——”

Tatiana rose from her seat.

“Gregory Mikhaïlovitch,” she said, “let us speak no more of that, I beg; if not for your own sake, at least for mine. It was not yesterday that I became acquainted with you, and I can easily imagine what you must feel at such a time as this? Why irritate the wound?” She paused, and struggled with the emotions which were rising within her, forcing back the tears which came to her eyes. After a moment she succeeded, and continued—“Why irritate an incurable wound? Leave it to the hand of time. I have only one request to make to you, Gregory Mikhaïlovitch. Be so kind as to take a letter to the post for me yourself: it is important, and we have no time to lose. I shall be very much obliged to you. Wait a minute; I will go for it at once.”

Upon the threshold of the door, Tatiana

turned, and cast an uneasy glance towards Capitoline Markovna; but she was sitting so gravely, and looked so severe, with her brows contracted and her lips compressed, that Tatiana confined herself to making her a sign of intelligence, and went out. But the door had scarcely closed after her when that solemn look vanished from the face of Capitoline Markovna. She rose, ran on tiptoe to Litvinof, bending almost double in order to look in his downcast face, and, trembling all over and her eyes streaming with tears, began to speak to him very fast and low, stammering at almost every word.

“The Lord help us! Gregory Mikailovitch, what is all this? A dream, is it not? *You* renounce Tatiana, *you* cease to love her, *you* fail to keep your word! Is it you who are acting thus, you whom

we reckoned upon as upon a wall of brass?
You? you? then? Gricha?"

Then she went on after a pause—

"Why you will kill her, Gregory Mikailovitch;" here her tears choked her. "She is putting a brave face on now, you know her character; she will not give way, she does not know how to take care of herself; all the more reason why others should take pity upon her. She is exhausting herself, she keeps repeating to me—'Aunt, we must preserve our dignity.' Dignity has a great deal to do with it; it is death! death!"

Tatiana moved a chair in the adjoining room.

"Yes, it is death that I foresee," continued the kind old lady. "And what can have happened to you? Are you bewitched? For a long time you have

been writing the most tender letters to her. How could a man of honour have conducted himself in this manner? I am, as you know, a woman without prejudices, a strong-minded woman; I have given to Tatiana a similar education, and she also——”

“Aunt!” came from the next room.

“But a word of honour is a duty, Gregory Mikhailovitch, especially to a man with your principles. If we do not recognize our duties, what else is there left for us? We cannot violate them at our pleasure, without weighing the result for others. It is iniquitous; yes, it is criminal. What kind of liberty is that?”

“Aunt, please to come here,” called the voice from the next room.

“Directly, my love, directly.” Capitoline Markovna seized Litvinof’s hand.

“I see that you are getting angry, Gregory Mikhailovitch.”

“I getting angry!” he tried to say, but his tongue failed him.

“I will not irritate you, I do not wish to do that; I wish, on the contrary, to implore you. Reflect while there is yet time; do not lose her, do not destroy your own happiness; she will still believe you. Gricha, she will believe you, nothing is lost yet; she will love you as a man was never loved before. Leave this hateful Baden, let us go together, cast off the charm that has bewitched you, and above all, have pity, have pity——”

“Aunt!” repeated Tatiana, with a shade of impatience.

But Capitoline Markovna no longer heard her.

“Only say ‘Yes,’” she murmured to

Litvinof, "and I will arrange it all ; make me a little sign with your head, a little sign once, like this !"

Litvinof would have died willingly, but the word "Yes," would not come out of his mouth ; and his head would not make the slightest movement.

Tatiana came in with a letter in her hand ; Capitoline Markovna moved away from Litvinof and leaned over the table, pretending to be examining some papers.

Tatiana approached Litvinof.

"This," she said, "is the letter of which I spoke. You will take it to the post-office at once, will you not ?"

Litvinof raised his eyes. It was really his judge who was standing before him. Tatiana appeared to him to have grown ; her face, resplendent with a beauty which he had never seen upon it, was rigid as

that of a statue; her chest did not appear to move; her dress, all of one shade, like antique drapery, fell in plain folds to her feet.

Tatiana was looking straight before her, and her gaze, which did not even embarrass Litvinof, was cold and passionless; it also was the gaze of a statue. Litvinof there read his condemnation; he bowed, took the letter from the hand which was extended towards him, and retired in silence.

Capitoline Markovna threw herself into the arms of Tatiana, but she gently pushed her away, and cast down her eyes. "Now, let us make haste," she said, and went back into her bedroom. Capitoline Markovna followed, with her head bowed down.

The letter which Tatiana had entrusted to Litvinof, was addressed to a friend of his at Dresden, a German, who let furnished

apartments. Litvinof allowed the letter to glide into the box, and it seemed as though with that sheet of paper he had allowed all his past, all his hopes in life, to glide into the tomb.

He sauntered out of the town, and wandered for some time through the narrow paths between the vineyards ; a feeling of contempt for himself buzzed constantly around him, like one of those flies which one cannot get rid of at a certain season of the year : the part which he had played in this last interview seemed to him so shamefully mean and pitiful.

When he returned to his hotel, he made inquiries respecting the ladies, and was informed that immediately after he went out, they had ordered a vehicle to take them to the railway station, and gone away without saying where they were going. Their

luggage had been packed, and their accounts settled since the morning.

Tatiana had only given Litvinof the letter to post in order to send him away. He inquired of the porter if the ladies had left a note for him ; the porter gave a reply in the negative, and expressed some surprise. This sudden departure, after having engaged the apartments for a week, evidently appeared to him dubious and singular.

Litvinof turned from him, and shut himself up in his room. He did not go out again till the next day, but passed a great part of the night at his desk, writing, and then tearing up what he had written. Dawn was already beginning to appear when he completed his long task, a letter to Irene.

CHAPTER XXII.

THIS is what the letter contained :—

“ She who was to have been my wife left yesterday ; we shall never see each other again. I do not even know where she is going to live. She has taken away with her all that has hitherto appeared to me desirable and precious ; all my plans and resolutions have disappeared with her ; all my labours are lost, the long course of toil through which I have sought to fit myself for a worthy and honourable career has become void ; all my studies have been

without an object, without value ; it is all gone, all dead ; yesterday I buried the whole of my past life.

“ I feel this acutely ; I see it, I know it, but I do not care about it. It is not to complain that I think of it. I have no cause to moan, so long as you love me. I only wish to tell you that of all this buried past, of all those hopes reduced to smoke and ashes, there remains to me but one thing living, unshaken—my love for you.

“ I have now nothing left but that love, to call it my only treasure would not be enough ; I am entirely enshrouded in that love, and it is my whole being, it is my future, my vocation, my sanctuary, and my home.

“ You know me, Irene ; you know how I hate hollow phrases, and, however strong may be the terms with which I try to

express my feelings, you will not doubt their sincerity, or tax them with exaggeration. It is not a young man lisping to you, in the ardour of his first transports, thoughtless vows, but a man already ripened by years, painting to you simply, candidly, almost with terror, that which he has discovered to be absolutely true. Yes, your love for me takes the place of all else. You shall be the judge: can I leave that *all* in the hands of another? Can I allow him to dispose of you? You belong to him! My whole being, every drop of blood in my heart would belong to him; and I must be simply the spectator of my own life? No, it is impossible! Impossible! Never to taste but in secret that which is the very breath of life, is only falsehood and death.

“I understand the greatness of the

sacrifice I claim of you, without right, for what could give me right to such a sacrifice? It is not egotism which leads me to act thus: an egotist would not have raised the question. Yes, my expectations are difficult of realization, and I am not surprised that they terrify you.

“ You hold the people by whom you are surrounded in aversion, their society fatigues and irritates you; but will you have the strength to abandon that society, to trample under foot all the laurels which it has weaved for you, and to despise public opinion — the opinion of those hateful people?

“ Interrogate yourself, Irene; do not take upon you a burden which is beyond your strength. I do not wish to recriminate, but, remember, once already you have been unable to resist the fascination of the posi-

tion I am asking you to leave. I have little to give you in exchange for all that you will have to give up. Therefore listen to my last words: if you do not feel to-morrow, or even to-day, that you can leave all and follow me,—you see I speak boldly, without choosing my terms,—if you are afraid of the unknown, of estrangement, of isolation, and of the contempt of men; in a word, if you are not sure of yourself, tell me so frankly and without delay, and I will go alone; I shall go with a broken heart, but blessing you for that frankness.

“If really, my beautiful and resplendent queen, you love a man so weak and obscure as myself, if you are indeed ready to share his lot, then give me your hand, and we will enter together upon our painful road. But, above all, do not forget this: my decision can undergo no change—all or

nothing. It is madness, but I cannot do otherwise; I love you too much.

“Yours, G. M.”

Litvinof was not much pleased with this letter; it did not exactly express what he wished to say, for he found some forced expressions in it. After all, it was no better than those he had torn up, but it contained what was most important, and Litvinof, exhausted and confused, did not feel himself capable of producing anything better.

He did not know how to give to his thoughts a literary form, and like all who are not in the habit of writing, style gave him a great deal of trouble. His first letter was certainly the best; it flowed naturally from his heart. However it may have been, Litvinof dispatched his letter to Irene, who replied by a short note:

“Come to me to-day; *he* will be absent till the evening. Your letter troubles me extremely. I do nothing but think—think—and my brain swims. I have a great weight upon my heart; but you love me, and I am happy. Come.

“Thine, I.”

She was in her boudoir when Litvinof entered. The same little girl who had looked out for him upon the stairs the day before introduced him. Upon the table lay an open packet of laces, which she was negligently turning over with one hand, while with the other she held Litvinof’s letter.

She had recently been weeping; for her eyelashes were still wet, and traces of tears could be seen upon her cheeks.

Litvinof paused upon the threshold of the door. She did not perceive him.

“ You are weeping,” he said with surprise.

She gave a start, and passed her hand over her hair with a smile.

“ What are you crying for?” repeated Litvinof.

She silently held out his letter.

“ What! is it that?” he said, after a pause.

“ Come, sit down, and give me your hand. Well, yes, I have been crying; what is there surprising in that? One would think it was easy——”

And she again showed him the letter.

Litvinof sat down.

“ I know it is not easy, Irene; I have not concealed that from you. I understand your situation; but if you have calculated the consequences of your love, if my arguments have convinced you, you must also

understand what I feel at the sight of your tears. I come here like a criminal awaiting my sentence—life or death? Your reply will decide all. Only, do not look at me with those eyes. They remind me of your old eyes, your eyes at Moscow."

Irene changed colour, and turned away, as though she had herself recognized something unpleasant in her look.

"What do you say, Gregory? Are you not ashamed? You ask me for a reply, as though you could doubt what that reply would be. My tears pain you; but you do not understand them. Your letter, my love, has caused me to reflect. You write that my love supplies the place of all, and that all your previous occupations have been in vain; and I cannot help asking myself whether a man can live entirely upon love. Would he not grow tired of

the one feeling ; would he not want to go back to a more active life ; and would he not sooner or later blame her who had drawn his mind from all other pursuits ? That is the thought which alarms me ; that is what makes me weep, and not what you suppose.

Litvinof gazed attentively at Irene, and she also looked attentively at him. Each was trying to read the soul of the other, each was trying to penetrate beyond what the spoken word could betray or conceal.

“ You are wrong,” said Litvinof. “ No doubt I badly expressed myself. Ennui ! inaction ! with the new powers which your love would give me ? Oh ! Irene, believe me, the whole universe is in your love for me, and I cannot tell myself all that it may produce.”

Irene became thoughtful.

“Where do we go then?” she murmured.

“Where? we will talk of that——. So you consent?”

She looked at him.

“Would it make you happy?”

“Oh, Irene!”

“You will regret nothing? Never?”

She leaned over the packet of laces, and began to arrange them.

“Do not be angry that I think of such trifles as these at a moment like this. I am obliged to go to a ball; these things have been sent for me to look at, and I must make a choice to-day. Ah! my heart is very big,” she exclaimed suddenly, and buried her face upon the parcel. Tears again came into her eyes, and she drew back, fearing that the tears might spoil the lace.

“Irene, you are crying again,” said Litvinof, anxiously.

“Well, yes,” replied Irene. “Oh! Gregory, do not torment me, and do not torment yourself. Let us be free creatures! What harm is there in my crying? Do you think that I myself know why my tears flow? You know, you understand my decision—you are sure that it will not change—that I consent to—what was it you said?—to all or nothing; what more do you ask? Let us be free! why these mutual chains? We are together now; you love me, and I love you; have we nothing better to do than to turn over and examine our feelings? Look at me: I do not harbour an illusion; I know I am criminal, and that *he* has a right to kill me. What does it matter? Let us be free. One day all to ourselves is eternity!”

She rose, and looked down at Litvinof with a smile, as she threw back a lock of hair, upon which stood two or three tears like pearls. A rich lace fichu slipped down from the table at her feet, and she trampled upon it with contempt.

“Do I not please you to-day? Have I grown ugly since yesterday? Tell me, have you ever seen an arm so beautiful? And this hair? Say, do you love me?”

She took both his hands, and rested her head against his bosom; the comb which secured her hair fell out, and her locks streamed loosely around her in a soft and perfumed veil.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LITVINOV walked up and down his chamber, with his head bowed upon his chest. It now remained for him to pass from theory to practice—to find the means of flight, of emigrating into an unknown country. A strange thing that those means had not yet chiefly occupied his thoughts; he felt more anxiety in asking himself whether he could really depend upon the decision which he had so obstinately claimed. Might not the pledged word be recalled? It is true,

Irene had said to him as she took leave of him, "Act, and inform me only when you are ready."

The thing was settled; no more doubting; now was the time to act; and Litvinof acted, at least in imagination. The money was the first thing to be thought of.

Litvinof found himself in the possession of 1328 florins; that was not a very considerable sum, it was sufficient however for present necessities; then he could write immediately to his father to send him as much money as possible, to sell a wood or a piece of land—but under what pretext? The pretext was not easily found. Irene had spoken, it is true, of *her jewels*, but it would not do to take them into consideration; those would be a resource to fall back upon in difficult times, if such should arrive. Besides, he had an excellent Geneva watch, upon which

he could obtain money—if it was only 400 francs.

Litvinof ran to a banker's and sounded him upon the possibility of a loan, but the bankers at Baden are distrustful and prudent people; to such overtures they generally draw a face a yard long: some will even laugh in your face as though they quite appreciate your innocent joke.

Litvinof, to his shame, also tried his luck at roulette; he went so far—oh! ignominy!—as to risk a thaler upon number 30, corresponding to the number of his years. He did this with a view of increasing his capital, but he went away leaving 28 florins upon the green cloth.

A second question, equally serious, was the passport. But for a woman a passport is not so obligatory; in some countries they do not require a passport at all; Bel-

gium, for instance, and England ; and then, if it were necessary, he could procure a foreign passport.

Litvinof weighed all this very seriously ; his energy was great and unshaken, but at the same time, notwithstanding his will, something ridiculous, almost comic, glided into all his plans, as though his project in itself was only a joke, as though nobody had ever eloped, except in plays and novels, or somewhere in the country, perhaps in the district of Tchoukloma or Sizranck, where, after a journey, people have the greatest difficulty in keeping themselves from dying with ennui.

Litvinof recollected an adventure of a friend of his, one Batzof, a retired cornet, who had carried off the daughter of a tradesman, in a carriage drawn by three horses with bells, after having got the

parents intoxicated as well as the young lady herself. It turned out that he was caught in the act, and was very near getting a sound thrashing into the bargain.

Litvinof was exceedingly angry with himself for a reminiscence so out of place; and then Tatiana returned to his mind, her abrupt departure, and all the shame and suffering which he had caused her, and he saw but too clearly that the affair in which he was engaged was anything but a jest; that he had been quite right in telling Irene that for his own honour there remained to him no other issue. And then again, merely at the name of Irene, something burning and yet sweet wrapped itself with an irresistible embrace round his heart.

A sound of horses' feet was heard, and he moved out of the way. Irene passed close to him, in company with the stout general.

She recognized Litvinof, and made him a sign of the head, and then lashing her horse, bounded forward at a rapid gallop, as the wind waved her veil behind her.

“*Pas si vite! Nom de Dieu! pas si vite!*” shouted the general, as he endeavoured to overtake her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE next morning, Litvinof was returning, after having had another conversation with his banker respecting the best means of receiving money, when the porter put a letter into his hand. He recognized the writing of Irene, and actuated by an evil presentiment, reached his room before breaking the seal. The letter was written in French, and was couched in these terms:—

“I have been thinking of your proposition all night. I am going to speak to you without evasion. You were candid

with me, and I will be candid with you: I *cannot* fly with you, I have not the *strength*. I feel how guilty I am towards you,—my second fault is greater than the first. I despise myself, I heap all kinds of reproaches upon myself, but I cannot change myself.

“It is in vain that I say to myself that I have destroyed your happiness, that you now really have a right to regard me as a coquette; that I have been the cause of all, and that I have given you a solemn promise.

“I am seized with fright, I seem horrible to myself, but I cannot act otherwise; I cannot, I cannot. I offer no excuse, I will not tell you that I have allowed myself to be led on—all that signifies nothing; but I must repeat to you once more, that I am yours, yours for ever! Dispose of me

as you will. But to fly, to abandon all—no! no! no! I begged you to save me; I hoped to repair all, to cast all around me into the fire, but it seems that there is no salvation for me—that the poison has penetrated too deeply. It appears that one cannot breathe this atmosphere for years with impunity!

“I have hesitated for a long time before writing this letter, for I was afraid of the effect it may have upon you. I have no hope but in your love, but I thought that it would be very dishonourable to conceal from you the truth, the more so as you have probably begun to take measures for the accomplishment of our design.

“Ah! it was delightful, but chimerical. Oh! my love, think of me as a feeble woman without value, but do not abandon me, do not abandon your Irene! I have no more

strength to leave this position than I have to live in it without you.

“We shall soon meet each other at Petersburg; go thither. We will find you some occupation; your talents will not be lost, you will have no difficulty in finding for them some honourable application; only, live near me, love me as I am, with all my weaknesses, with all my faults, and be convinced that no heart will be so tenderly devoted to you as the heart of your Irene.

“Come to me soon; I shall not have one moment of repose so long as I do not see you.

“Your own, I.”

The blood rushed to Litvinof’s head and curdled, then fell back slowly, heavily upon his heart, which beat like a hammer against his chest. He again read Irene’s letter,

and, as formerly at Moscow, he sank senseless upon his divan.

A dark gulf had suddenly opened around him, and he contemplated it with stupefied horror. He was once more the toy of deceit—worse than that, of falsehood and baseness. His career was destroyed; all had been torn up to the last root, and now the only branch to which he had clung was shivered to atoms.

“Follow us to Petersburg!” he repeated, with a sardonic laugh. “We will there find you some occupation. Would she make of me a gentleman of the chamber, I wonder? Who is this *we*? Then there is something mysterious and deformed here that I do not understand, which she would efface and cast into the fire! Here is a circle of intrigues, of secret connections, a circle of Belskys and Dolskys! What a future! What a

magnificent *rôle* awaits me! To live near her, to frequent her company, to share the corrupt melancholy of a lady *à la mode*, tired of fashion and society, and yet not able to live out of it; to be the friend of the house, and therefore of His Excellency —until the caprice has passed, until the plebeian has lost flavour, and is replaced by the fat general or by M. Finikof; all that is possible, agreeable, even honourable! Does she not speak of usefully employing my ‘talents?’ But as for the ‘design,’ that is all chimera, chimera.”

There was rising within the mind of Litvinof wild passions similar to the squalls which precede a hurricane. Each expression in Irene’s letter increased his rage; he was, above all, wounded by the assurances which she renewed upon the inviolability of her sentiments.

“It cannot be left thus,” he exclaimed at length; “I will not permit her thus cruelly to dispose of my life.”

He rose hastily, and caught up his hat. But what was he to do? Rush to her? Answer her letter? He allowed his arms to fall by his side. Yes, what was he to do?

Had he not himself offered her that fatal choice? It was not such as he desired; but every choice has its risk. She had broken her word, it is true; she had herself first declared that she was ready to abandon all and follow him, that was true again; but she did not deny her fault; she called herself a feeble woman, and she had not tried to deceive him—she had deceived herself.

What could he answer to that? At least she had not sought subterfuges; she was

candid even to cruelty. Nothing obliged her to explain herself so promptly; she might have taxed his patience with promises—have carried the matter on, and left him in suspense till her departure with her husband for Italy.

But she had poisoned his life; she had poisoned two lives! However, it was not she who was guilty towards Tatiana, it was he, Litvinof—he alone; he had no right to put away from himself the responsibility of his fault, which weighed upon his neck like a collar of iron. All this was as it was; but what remained to be done now?

He threw himself upon his seat again, and once more, gloomily and bitterly, began to run the matter over in his mind.

“And if I were to believe her?” he said, abruptly. “She loves me; is there not something inevitable, indomitable, like a law of

nature, in this inclination, in this passion, which has been preserved through so many years, to burst forth one day with so much violence? Live at Petersburg—I should not be the first in that situation. Where could I have taken refuge with her?"

He began to think again; Irene appeared to his imagination as she had been represented in his last souvenirs, but it was not for long; he recovered himself, and thrust from him with increasing anger both those souvenirs and that fascinating image.

"You offer me a cup of gold," he exclaimed; "but there is poison in the draught, and your white wings are soiled with mire. Leave me! Remain here with you, while I have—sent away my betrothed? It would be too infamous?"

He wrung his hands, and another face, with the stamp of suffering upon its im-

movable features, and with a mute reproach in its farewell look, rose from the abyss.

Litvinof thus tormented himself for a long time; for a long time his burning thoughts were cast from side to side, like an invalid upon his bed. He grew calm at last; he was decided. From the first moment, he had foreseen this decision; it had presented itself at first to him like a distant object, scarcely perceptible through the tumult and the darkness of his inward struggle; then, it advanced insensibly, irresistibly, and ended by planting itself coldly, like a steel blade, in his heart.

Litvinof once more drew his box from the corner of his room, and again collected all his baggage, without hurrying himself, and even with a kind of stupid regularity; then he rang for a waiter, paid his bill, and

dispatched to Irene a note in Russian, containing the following words:—

“I do not know whether you are now more guilty towards me than formerly, but I know that the actual blow has been much more violent. It is the last. You say to me, ‘I cannot;’ I also repeat to you, ‘I cannot—act as you please; I neither can nor will.’ Do not answer me. You are incapable of giving me the only reply that I will accept. I leave to-morrow morning by the first train. Farewell; be happy. It is probable that we shall never meet again.”

Litvinof did not go out all day. Did he expect something? God knows! About seven o’clock, a lady, wrapped in a black cloak, with a thick veil over her face, twice approached the steps of the hotel. After retiring and looking about, she suddenly

made a decisive gesture with her hand, and resolutely hastened towards the steps for the third time.

“Where are you going, Irene Pavlovna?” said a voice behind her.

She turned round with a convulsive movement, and saw Potoughine running after her. She paused and reflected for a moment, and then, springing towards him, caught his hand and began to drag him along.

“Take me away, take me away!” she stammered, almost out of breath.

“What is the matter with you, Irene Pavlovna?”

“Take me away!” she repeated, with increased energy, “if you would not have me remain here for ever.”

Potoughine humbly bowed his head, and the two went away together.

Early the following morning, Litvinof was on the point of leaving the hotel, when Potoughine entered the room. He came up to him and grasped his hand without speaking a word. Litvinof also remained silent. Both looked embarrassed, and made vain efforts to smile.

“I have come to wish you a pleasant journey,” stammered Potoughine at length.

“And how did you know that I was leaving to-day?” inquired Litvinof.

Potoughine attentively examined the floor. “I know it—as you see. Our last conversation took a somewhat strange direction. I did not like to let you go away without expressing to you my sincere sympathy.”

“You have sympathy for me now? When I go—”

Potoughine looked sadly at Litvinof.

“Ah! Gregory Mikhailovitch, Gregory Mikhailovitch,” he began, with a deep sigh, “artifices and concealments are no longer of use between us. Come, you do not seem to me to be familiar with our national literature, and you probably have not an idea of Vaska Bouslaef?”

“Of whom?”

“Of Vaska Bouslaef, the brave Novogorodian—in the history of Kircha Danilof.”

“Who was Bouslaef?” grumbled Litvinof, a little disconcerted by the unexpected turn the conversation had taken. “I know nothing of him.”

“Never mind. This is what I want to draw your attention to. Vaska Bouslaef, after having led his Novogorodians on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; and after having bathed, to their great scandal, in the sacred River Jordan, climbed to the top of Mount Tabor.

Now, on the top of this mount is a stone which people from all nations have tried in vain to leap over. Vaska must try his chance. In his path lay a death's-head, which he kicked with his foot. 'Why do you kick me?' said the death's-head. 'I once was alive, but now I am rolling in the dust; the same thing will happen to you.' And, in fact, Vaska took his leap, and had almost cleared the stone, when his toe caught, and he fractured his skull. I must here observe to my friends the slavophiles, who are so much inclined to kick the death's-heads and the 'rotten' nations, that it would be well for them to reflect upon this legend."

"But to what does all this tend?" interrupted Litvinof, impatiently. "It is time for me to go, excuse me——"

"That story tends to tell you," responded

Potoughine, and his eyes sparkled with a friendly feeling, of which Litvinof little thought him capable; "that tends to tell you, that you have not kicked the death's-head, and perhaps it will be given to you as a recompense to leap the fatal stone. I will not detain you longer, only allow me to shake hands with you."

"I shall not attempt to leap," replied Litvinof, giving Potoughine a hearty grasp; and to the bitter sensations which filled his mind at that moment was joined sincere compassion for this poor solitary being. "But I must go, I must go," he added; and he caught up his luggage.

"Can I carry anything for you?" said Potoughine.

"No, thank you, do not trouble; I can carry it all myself."

He put on his hat, and took his carpet-bag.

“And so you say”—he asked, already upon the threshold of the door—“that you have seen her?”

“Yes, I have seen her.”

“Well—what was she doing?”

“She expected you all day yesterday—she will expect you to-day.”

“Oh!—tell her—; no, it would be useless. Good bye—good bye.”

Litvinof hastily ran down stairs, threw himself into the vehicle, and reached the railway station without turning a single look upon the town in which he was leaving a portion of his life. He seemed to have abandoned himself to a powerful wave which had seized him, and which bore him on, and he was firmly resolved to make no effort to escape.

He was already seated in the train.

“Gregory Mikhaïlovitch,” murmured a supplicating voice behind him.

He gave a start.

“ Is it possible ? Irene ! ”

It was she, indeed. Enveloped in the shawl of her maid, and wearing a travelling-hat, which scarcely kept her loosely-tied locks from falling over her shoulders, she stood upon the platform looking at him with mournful but eager eyes.

“ Come back, come back. I have come for you,” said those eyes. And what did they not promise ! She did not move ; she had not the power to speak ; but everything about her seemed to implore grace.

Litvinof had great difficulty in keeping himself from wavering, from bounding towards her ; but the saving wave to which he had yielded himself got the upper hand. He settled himself in his seat, and, turning round, pointed out to Irene a vacant place beside him. She understood. There was

still time. A step, a movement, and two beings, bound to each other for ever, would have been borne forward into the unknown. While she was hesitating, the whistle sounded, and the train began to move.

Litvinof threw himself back in his seat. Irene staggered to a seat, and there allowed herself to sink down, to the extreme surprise of an unemployed diplomatist, who happened to be strolling about.

He knew little of Irene; but took a great interest in her. Seeing that she had partly fainted, he presumed that she had an attack of the nerves, and thought it his duty, as a gallant cavalier, to come to her assistance. But his surprise took still larger proportions when at the first word he addressed to her she rose abruptly, repulsed the arm which he offered to her, gained the

street, and in a few minutes disappeared amidst one of those white mists so frequent at Baden during the first days of autumn.

CHAPTER XXV.

I ONCE happened to go into the cottage of a peasant woman who had just lost an only and dearly beloved child. To my great surprise, I found her quite calm, almost gay.

“Do not be surprised,” said the husband, who no doubt observed this impression; “she is ossified now.”

Litvinof also was “ossified;” a calm similar to that of this peasant-woman had come over him during the first hours of his journey.

Completely prostrated, and despairing,

he yet breathed. He breathed after all the alarms and all the torments of the last week, after all the blows which had fallen, one after the other, upon his head. These blows had shaken him the more, as he was little used to such storms.

He now calculated upon absolutely nothing, and endeavoured to recollect nothing. He was going to Russia only because it was necessary to go somewhere! He was unable to form the smallest design. He did not recognize himself; he did not attempt to account for his actions. He had lost his individuality, and it had become a matter of indifference to him.

It seemed at times as though he was taking away his own corpse; nothing within him but a sense of incurable sorrow reminded him that he was still in existence. From time to time it appeared to him in-

comprehensible how a woman, how love, could have obtained such an influence over him.

“Horrible weakness!” he muttered, and he drew his cloak round him and settled himself more comfortably in the carriage. “I must commence a new life.”

The next moment he smiled with bitter astonishment at himself. He began to look out of window. The weather was dull; there was no rain, but the fog had not dispersed, and low clouds veiled the sky.

The wind blew against the train, and at times masses of smoke, sometimes white, sometimes black, came against the window. Litvinof sat and followed them with his eyes. Constantly, without interval, rising and falling, catching to the grass and bushes, streaming far behind, and melting

away into the damp air, rolled one after the other those clouds, always new but always the same, in a sort of monotonous and tiresome play.

At times the wind turned, or there came a bend in the road; then all these white masses disappeared, to come over to the other window, and an interminable tail concealed from the eyes of Litvinof the valley of the Rhine.

Litvinof looked and looked in silence; a fantastic thought had seized his mind. He was alone in the carriage, without anyone to interfere with him.

“Smoke! smoke!” he repeated several times, and suddenly everything appeared to him like smoke: his own life, Russian life, everything human, and especially everything Russian.

“It is all nothing but smoke and vapour,”

he thought ; “ all appears to be perpetually changing, one image succeeds another, phenomenon replaces phenomenon, but in reality it is all the same ; it is all hurrying onward, none know where, and it all vanishes, without leaving a trace behind it, without having attained to anything. The wind blows from another quarter, all rushes over to the other side, and there recommences, without relaxation, the same feverish and fruitless play.

He called to mind all that had passed before his eyes during the last few years, not without bustle and uproar. “ Smoke,” he murmured, “ Smoke ! ”

He thought of the confused discussions, and the clamorous exclamations of Goubareff’s drawing-room, and of the disputes of others, men of high and low position, progressionists and retrogrades, young and old ;—“ Smoke ! ” he repeated, “ Smoke ! ”

He thought also of that pic-nic at the Old Chateau, of the discussions of other statesmen, and even of all that Potoughine had extolled. "Smoke ! Smoke ! all smoke, and nothing more."

And his own efforts, his sentiments, his attempts, and his dreams ? The thought of them only provoked a sign of discouragement.

Meanwhile the train was hurrying along Rastadt, and Carlsruhe, and Bruchsal, were left far behind ; upon the right stretched out the mountains, afterwards to draw near, but less high, and less covered with forests.

The train came to a short turn ; they were at Heideldorf. The carriages glided into the station ; the news-boys began to offer all sorts of papers, even Russian journals, and the passengers got out and

walked about the platform; but Litvinof did not leave his corner, where he sat with his head bowed upon his chest. Suddenly he heard his name pronounced, and raised his head; the face of Bindasof appeared at the door; was it an hallucination? But no, it was a reality, for the next moment appeared all the well-known faces from Baden.

There was Madame Soukhautchikof, and here was Vorochilof; all came hurrying towards him, while Bindasof brawled—

“Where is Pichtchalkin? We are waiting for him; but never mind him, let us go on; we shall all meet at Goubaref’s.”

“Yes, friend, yes, Goubaref expects us; come along,” said Bambaef, throwing his arms about.

Litvinof would have been seized with a fit of anger, if he had not had such a load

upon his heart. He stared in Bindasof's face, and turned away in silence.

“They tell you Goubaref is here!” exclaimed Madame Soukhautschikof, as her eyes made a desperate struggle to escape.

Litvinof did not move.

“Come, listen to me, Litvinof,” said Bambaef, returning to the charge; “there is here not only Goubaref, but a whole phalanx of distinguished Russians, capital fellows; they are all studying natural science, and all have the most liberal opinions! Pray remain at least long enough to see them. There is, especially, a certain——oh! I forgot his name! He is a real genius!”

“There, leave him alone, Rostislof Ardaliovitch,” said Madame Soukhautschikof; “you see what the man is; the whole race are alike. There is an aunt; she appeared

to me at first a good sort of a woman, and I travelled here with her two days ago ; she had only just touched at Baden, and was already returning. Well, on the way, I tried to question her ; but would you believe that I could not get a word out of the proud, hateful old aristocrat !”

Poor Capitoline Markovna an ' aristocrat ! Had she ever expected such humiliation ?

But Litvinof still remained silent, and, turning away, drew his cap down over his eyes. At last the train started again.

“ Give us a farewell word, man of stone that you are !” shouted Bindasof. “ Did ever anybody see a man act like that before ? Ass ! blockhead !” he added.

The train was hurrying away, and he could bluster with impunity.

“ Miser ! snail ! N. B. !”

Had Bindasof invented this last name impromptu, or had he borrowed it? I do not know; but it is certain that it so struck two of the distinguished gentlemen—"the capital fellows," the "students of natural science"—that a few days later it made its appearance in the pages of a Russian periodical which was then published at Heidelberg, under the title, "*A tout venant je crache.*"*

And Litvinof took up his song:

"Smoke! smoke! smoke!"

"There are now at Heidelberg," he said, "more than a hundred Russian students, who study chemistry, natural philosophy, and physiology, and will hear of nothing else. Four or five years will pass, and there will not be fifteen of my countrymen to listen to the lectures of the same

* An historical fact.

eminent professors. The wind will have changed, the smoke will have passed over on to the other side. Smoke! smoke! smoke!"*

During the night, he passed through Cassel. With the darkness, an intolerable agony had seized his heart, as though a vulture had fixed its talons in it, and he began to weep, with his head thrust down into one corner of the carriage. His tears flowed for a long time without relieving his heart, which seemed to be torn more and more.

At the same time, at an inn in Cassel, Tatiana lay upon a bed burning with fever, while Capitoline Markovna watched over her.

"Tania," said the latter, "for goodness

* This presentiment of Litvinof was realized; in 1866 there were only thirteen Russian students at Heidelberg in the summer, and twelve in the winter.

sake, let me send a telegram to Gregory
Mikhailovitch ; let me, Tania."

"No, aunt," she replied, "you must not;
do not alarm yourself. Give me some
water; I shall be better soon."

And, in fact, in a week she had recovered
her health; and the two friends continued
their journey.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WITHOUT stopping either at St. Petersburg or Moscow, Litvinof returned to his modest patrimony. He was quite shocked at the sight of his father, he was so old and broken. The old man rejoiced to see his son, as much as a man could rejoice who had already done with life; he hastened to give him all the information in his power respecting the management of his affairs, which were in great disorder; and after lingering for a few weeks, breathed his last.

Litvinof was left alone in the old home.

He began to cultivate the land with an ulcerated heart, without hope, without any taste for his labour, and without money. The management of property in Russia is no light matter, as only too many know. Therefore we shall not dwell upon the difficulties which Litvinof had to encounter. He could not think of introducing reforms and ameliorations; the application of the principles which he had collected in foreign countries had to be indefinitely put off; necessity obliged him to live from day to day, and to resign himself to all sorts of concessions, both material and moral.

The new institutions worked badly, and the old ones had lost all power; inexperience had to struggle against dishonesty; stagnant and already drying up, like our vast marshes, the old state of things no longer supported anything; there only

floated upon the surface the grand word "Liberty," just pronounced by the mouth of the Czar, as the Spirit of God in old times moved upon the waters.

It was necessary above all things to have patience, and patience less passive than active, a persistent patience which would not give way even before deceit. This was doubly painful to Litvinof in the state of mind in which he found himself. He had little taste for life, how could he have for toil?

One year rolled past, a second followed, and the third was entered upon. The grand idea of emancipation began to produce its fruits, and exercise its influence over customs; it could be seen that the germ was springing up, and that germ could no longer be stifled by any enemy either open or secret.

Although Litvinof gave to his people the greater portion of the produce of his land at harvest-time, which was returning to the primitive mode of culture, he was not without prosperity. He repaired his house and established a small farm with five free labourers, after having changed them at least forty times, and paid off his heaviest debts.

His powers of mind had returned, and he felt more like what he had been formerly. A sense of profound sadness never left him, indeed ; he led a mode of life which was not suited to his age. He had shut himself up within a narrow circle and renounced all connections with the outer world ; but he had no longer that hateful listlessness which had at first clogged all his energies : he walked and acted as a living being in the midst of living beings.

The last traces of the charm to which he had yielded had also disappeared: all that had passed at Baden was looked back upon only as a dream. And Irene—her image had also grown pale, and at last vanished altogether; it was only at intervals that it reappeared like a vaguely dangerous figure surrounded by a mist.

He had rarely received any news of Tatiana; he only knew that she had settled with her aunt in her small patrimony, situated two hundred verstes from his own estate, that she lived very quietly, going out little, and scarcely ever receiving visitors, and moreover that she was calm and well.

One fine May morning he was sitting in his office, absently looking over a Petersburg newspaper, when the servant announced the arrival of an old uncle. This uncle, a cousin

of Capitoline Markovna, had called to pay him a visit, having come into the neighbourhood to take possession of some property which he had recently purchased. He remained several days with his nephew, and talked to him a great deal respecting Tatiana.

The day after his departure, Litvinof sent to the latter a letter, the first since their separation. He requested permission to renew their acquaintance, at least by correspondence, and desired also to know whether he must give up all hope of seeing her again. It was not without anxiety that he awaited the reply. It came at length. Tatiana replied very kindly to his overture.

“ If you have any idea of coming to see us,” she said, in conclusion, “ you will give us very great pleasure. Come if you can :

they say that even invalids are better when they are together than when they are separated."

Capitoline Markovna also sent her respects to him.

Litvinof was seized with a childish joy ; it was years since his heart had beaten so gaily as it did that day. Everything suddenly appeared to him bright and serene.

When the sun rises and chases away the obscurity of the night, a soft breeze passes with the morning rays over the earth and refreshes it ; Litvinof felt some such sweet and enlivening influence. He laughed at everything that day, even as he overlooked his workpeople and gave them their orders. He at once began to make his preparations for the journey, and fifteen days later he was on his way to Tatiana.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HE travelled slowly, over cross-roads, without any unusual incident: once only the band of a wheel broke; the farrier heated and hammered, and railed against the wheel and against himself, then ended by declaring that nothing could be done to it. Fortunately it was found that it was possible to travel even with a broken wheel, provided the roads were “soft,” that is to say, muddy. This accident was to Litvinof the occasion of three meetings.

At a place where he stopped, he fell

upon a meeting of proprietors, presided over by Pichtchalkin, who reminded him of a Solon or a Solomon—such was the prudence with which his words were impregnated, and such was the unlimited confidence which his associates seemed to place in him.

Even the outward appearance of Pichtchalkin brought to mind the seven sages of antiquity: he had but one tuft of hair upon his head, and an expression of virtuous beatitude was stamped upon his fat, but solemn face.

He congratulated Litvinof “upon having come—if I may use that ambitious expression—into my own neighbourhood,” then majestically paused, seized with an excess of lofty feelings.

Litvinof however got from him some news of Vorochilof, among others.

The man of the “list of honour” had

entered the service, and had already read to the officers of his regiment a paper upon Buddhism or dynamics, or something of that sort—Pichtchalkin did not recollect for certain.

At another place they were a long time putting the horses to; it was just getting light. Litvinof, who had been asleep in his vehicle, was aroused by a voice which he seemed to know. He opened his eyes. Good heavens! was that not M. Goubaref, in a grey morning-jacket and loose trousers, standing upon the steps of the post-house, and uttering abuse upon everybody who came in his way? No, it could not be M. Goubaref; but what a wonderful resemblance! Only this individual had a larger mouth, a better set of teeth, a harsher look, a larger nose, a more bushy beard, and, in general, a body thicker and heavier.

“R-r-ras-cals! r-r-ras-cals!” he shouted with increasing rage, exhibiting the jaws of a wolf; “heathen that you are! This is the liberty you boast of—one can’t even get a horse put to—r-r-ras-cals!”

“R-r-ras-cals! r-r-ras-cals!” yelped another voice behind him; and a second individual appeared upon the steps, in a grey jacket and loose trousers. This time it was really, beyond the possibility of doubt, the real M. Goubaref—Stephen Nikolaevitch Goubaref.

“Heathen wretches!” he continued, in imitation of his brother (the first jacket was his elder brother, the “dentist” of the old school, who managed his property). “They must be thrashed; there is nothing else to be done with them; they must have their heads broken and their teeth knocked out. All they can do is to prate about liberty!

Wait a little, and I'll let them see. But where is M. Roston? What is he thinking about? It is his place, the slaggard, to spare us this trouble."

"I have told you, brother," observed Goubaref senior, "that he is good for nothing; he is such a lazy scoundrel! Monsieur Roston! Monsieur Roston! Where have you got to?"

"Roston! Roston!" bellowed the younger and stouter Goubaref. "Call him louder, Dorimedou the Nikolaevitch."

"I have made myself hoarse already, Stephen Nikolaevitch. Monsieur Roston!"

"Here I am! here I am!" said a breathless voice; and round a corner of the house appeared—Bambaef.

Litvinof allowed a cry of surprise to escape him. The unfortunate enthusiast was muffled up in a greatcoat, the sleeves

of which were all in tatters. His features were not so much changed as deformed and shrunken; his haggard eyes expressed servile terror and submission, like those of a starving dog; but a pair of dyed moustaches still ornamented his thin lips.

From the top of the steps, the brothers Goubaref immediately began with one accord to heap abuse upon him. He stepped in the mud, and, humbly bending his back, tried to appease them with a feeble smile, as he twisted his cap in his hands and assured them that the horses would be ready in a moment. But the brothers did not stop till the younger saw Litvinof.

Whether it was that he recognized him, or whether it was that he was ashamed of making such an uproar before a stranger, he turned abruptly upon his feet like a bear, and, showing his beard, went into the

house ; the elder also broke off, and with a look no less than of a bear, followed into the den. The great Goubaref had not lost his influence in his country, it appeared.

Bambaef was about to follow the two brothers, when Litvinof called him by his name. He looked back, and shaded his eyes with his hand, and, recognizing Litvinof, sprang towards him with open arms ; but on reaching the vehicle, he grasped the door, and leaning his chest upon it, wept like a fountain.

“ Come, that’s enough of that,” said Litvinof, leaning towards him, and touching his shoulder.

But he continued to sob.

“ This—this is where——” stammered Bambaef, between his sobs.

“ Bambaef ! ” roared the brothers from the depths of the izba.

Bambaef raised his head, and hastily dried his tears.

“Good day, my friend,” he murmured; “good-bye! good-bye! You hear they are calling me.”

“But what brings you here?” inquired Litvinof; “and what is the meaning of all this? I thought they were calling a Frenchman.”

“I am their manager, their steward,” replied Bambaef, pointing towards the izba. “They have given me a French name for a joke. What can I do, my friend? I was dying of hunger. I have not a penny, and I was obliged to put my neck into the collar. It was not good to be proud.”

“But has *he* been long in Russia? How did he come to leave his associates?”

“Oh! my friend, all that is put on one side; the weather has changed. Madame

Soukhautchikof, Matrena Kouzminichna, was simply turned out of doors. She has gone to Portugal."

"Gone to Portugal, is she? How absurd!"

"Yes, brother, to Portugal, with two Matrenians."

"With whom?"

"With two Matrenians. The men of her party are called thus."

"Matrena Kouzminichna has a party? Is it large?"

"It is composed of two individuals. He has been here six months. The others are looked sharply after; but nothing has happened to him. He lives here in the country with his brother; and if you heard now—"

"Bambaef!"

"Directly, Stephen Nikolaevitch; I am coming at once. And are you prospering,

my dear friend? are you making your fortune? Thank God for that! And where are you going now? Ah! to be sure. You recollect Baden? That was life! That reminds me—you remember Bindasof? Only fancy, he is dead! He took some situation in a brandy distillery, and in a quarrel at a tavern had his skull fractured with a billiard-cue. Yes, times have become very hard! But I still say, Russia; there is no country like Russia! Look at that pair of geese; there is not such another pair of geese in all Europe. They are real Arzamas geese."

And having paid this last tribute to his indomitable need of enthusiasm, Bambaeff ran into the post-house, where his name was again pronounced with all sorts of imprecations.

As the day declined, Litvinof drew near

to the residence of Tatiana. The cottage in which she lived who was to have been his wife, was situated upon the side of a hill, above a small stream, in the middle of a newly-planted garden. This cottage was quite new, indeed hardly finished, and it could be seen from a considerable distance overlooking the river and the fields. Litvinof discovered it two verstes off.

Ever since the last relay he had been seized with an inward agitation, which was constantly increasing. "How shall I be welcomed?" he thought. "How shall I introduce myself?"

In order to pass the time, he entered into a conversation with the driver, an old man with a grey beard, who, however, had assured him it was thirty verstes, while it was not twenty-five. He asked him if he knew the proprietors of Chestof.

“Of Chestof? Not know them! They are very good ladies; there is nothing to be said against them. They look after all the poor people. They are regular doctors. People come to them from miles around. There is a crowd of them sometimes. When, for instance, anybody falls ill, or hurts themselves, off they run to them; they give them some medicine, a little paper of powder, or a piece of plaster, and that cures them. And they never want any thanks. ‘We do not do it for money,’ they say. And they have opened a school—but, as to that, that’s a very stupid thing.”

While the man was chattering, Litvinof did not take his eyes from the house. A woman dressed in white appeared upon the balcony, seeming to be looking for something, then disappeared.

Was it not she ?
His heart gave a violent leap.
“ Faster ! faster ! ” he called out to the
driver.

The man whipped his horses. A few
minutes more, and the carriage passed the
open gate. Capitoline Markovna was al-
ready running down the steps, red in the
face, clapping her hands, and crying, “ I re-
cognized him ! I recognized him ! It is he,
it is he ! I recognized him ! ”

Litvinof sprang lightly to the ground,
before the little Cossack had time to open
the door, and hastily embracing Capitoline
Markovna, ran into the house, crossed the
hall and the dining-room—and found himself
face to face with Tatiana.

She looked at him with her sweet loving
eyes (she had grown a little stouter, which
rather improved her appearance), and held

out her hand to him. He did not take it, but fell upon his knees at her feet. She had not expected that, and did not know what to say or do. Tears came into her eyes; she was afraid, and yet at the same time her face was covered with joy.

“Gregory Mikhailovitch, what is the meaning of this ?” she said.

But he continued to kiss the hem of her dress, calling to mind, with a truly contrite heart, that formerly, at Baden, he had also knelt at her feet. But how different then from now.

“Tania,” he murmured, “Tania, have you forgiven me ?”

“Aunt, aunt, what is this ?” inquired Tatiana of Capitoline Markovna, who came in just then.

“Leave him alone, Tatiana,” replied the

good old creature; "you can see that he has repented."

However, it is time to conclude; and there is hardly anything more to be added: the reader will divine the rest.

But Irene?

She is as enchanting as ever, notwithstanding her thirty years. She has a large circle of admirers, and would have still more, if—

Will the reader allow us to transport him for a moment to St. Petersburg, into one of its most splendid edifices?

Here, then, is a vast apartment decorated and furnished (I will not say richly, the expression would be too feeble), but gorgeously, with an ostentation and an art which had been carried out regardless of expense.

Do you not feel a shudder of awe pass over you? You have penetrated a temple consecrated to the most immaculate virtue, to the most sublime morality, in short, to that which is not terrestrial, in which there reigns a silence truly mysterious. Velvet hangings before the doors and velvet curtains at the windows, a soft and thick carpet upon the floor, all is arranged to subdue the least vulgar sound and keep out every rude sensation. The carefully shaded lamps call up salutary feelings; a chaste perfume floats upon the secluded atmosphere; the very kettle upon the table bubbles with reserve and moderation.

The mistress of the house, a very important personage in the world of Petersburg, speaks so low that she can scarcely be heard. She always speaks in this manner, as though there were a suffering invalid

in the room, and her sister, who pours out the tea, moves her lips without emitting any decided sound whatever, so that a young man sitting in front of her, who has chanced to drop into this temple, cannot for the life of him make out what she says to him, as she murmurs simply, for the sixteenth time, “*Voulez-vous une tasse de thé?*”

In the corners of the room may be seen men, still young, but already venerable in appearance: their countenances betray a tranquil servility; their faces, notwithstanding an insinuating expression, wear an unvarying calm, and bunches of stars and crosses glitter modestly upon their manly chests.

The conversation is also very peaceful, turning only upon religious and patriotic subjects, such as Glinka’s *Goutte mystérieuse*, the missions to the West, and the monasteries and confraternities of White Russia.

Footmen appear at rare intervals, their enormous calves, encased in silk stockings, trembling at every step; and the respectful alacrity of these robust mercenaries shows up still more the general atmosphere of distinction, virtue, and piety. It is a temple! it is indeed a temple!

“Have you seen Madame Ratmirof?” inquired a lady, in a languishing tone.

“I saw her to-day with Lise,” replied the mistress of the house, in an ethereal voice. You would have thought it was an *Æolian* harp. “I pity her—she has a capricious mind—*elle n'a pas la foi*.”

“Yes, yes,” continued the same person; “you recollect Peter Ivanovitch very judiciously observed, *qu'elle a—qu'elle a* a capricious mind.”

“*Elle n'a pas la foi*,” sighed the mistress of the house, the words seeming to come

from her lips like the smoke of incense. “*C'est une âme égarée.* She has a capricious mind.”

“She has a capricious mind,” the lips of her sister seemed to repeat.

And that is why all the young men are not in love with Irene. They fear her—they are afraid of her “capricious mind.” This is a phrase commonly applied to her, and, like all such phrases, it contains a great deal of truth. And it is not alone the young men who are afraid of her, but also mature men—men of high position, even personages.

No person has such skill and acuteness in detecting the ridiculous or feeble side of every character,—no one knows so well how to stigmatize it with a word—and that word is always the more cutting as

it comes from a dainty and smiling mouth. It is difficult to say what passes in her mind; but, among the crowd of her worshippers, rumour accords to none the title of favourite.

Irene's husband is rapidly advancing along the path which is called that of honour. The stout general has gone by him, while the general of the honeyed words lags behind.

In the same town where Irene resides, exists also our friend Sozouthe Potoughine. He sees her but rarely: the child which had been confided to his care is dead. There no longer exists any occasion for his keeping up an acquaintance with Madame Ratmirof.

THE END.

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